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**An Ordinary Crisis?
Kinship in Botswana's Time of AIDS**

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Abstract

This thesis demonstrates that all of the practices which define and produce the Tswana family involve dimensions of risk, conflict, and crisis – glossed as *dikgang* (sing. *kgang*) – that also threaten to undo it. *Dikgang* need constantly to be addressed in the right ways by the right people, in a continuously adaptive process of negotiation. Efforts to negotiate *dikgang* are also fraught, and often produce further problems in turn. I show that Tswana kinship is experienced, generated, and sustained in a continuous cycle of risk, conflict, and irresolution; and that it creates and thrives on crisis. In a kinship system renowned for its structural fluidity, I demonstrate that these processes chart the limits of family, and define relationships within it. I further suggest that understanding kinship in these terms provides unique insight into the effects of public health and social welfare crises – like the AIDS epidemic – which may work to strengthen Tswana families, rather than simply destroying them. However, governmental and non-governmental interventions responding to such crises operate according to different assumptions about the stability and fragility of the family, and its *incapacity* to cope with crisis. The thesis argues that the frustrations such interventions typically face may be traced back to divergent understandings about what constitutes and sustains family, and the role of conflict and crisis in that process. The effects of such interventions are linked to the ways in which they enable, invert, disrupt, or bypass everyday practices of kinship among the Tswana, and instantiate practices and ideals of kinship from elsewhere. I argue that holding these intervening agencies and families in the same frame illustrates suggestive links between the spheres of kinship and politics on both national and transnational levels.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores the effects of HIV/AIDS – and of government and non-governmental (NGO) programmes launched in response to the epidemic – on families in Botswana, southern Africa. Taking the perspective of the daily lives of a large extended family in rural south-Eastern Botswana, it demonstrates that all of the major practices that create Tswana families – living together, caring for one another,

having and raising children, getting married, and so on – also produce risk, conflict, and crisis (or *dikgang*). Far from destroying families, as we might expect, these *dikgang* prove crucial to their resilience. The ongoing negotiation – and *irresolution* – of conflict and crisis builds, defines, and establishes the limits of the Tswana family, and produces Tswana personhood as well – creating further *dikgang* and requiring further negotiation, in a continuous cycle. And this cycle makes Tswana families remarkably resilient in the face of major social welfare and public health crises like the AIDS pandemic. Government and NGO programmes that seek to support families in the context of AIDS, however, tend to be modelled on very different – largely Euro-American – notions of what family is and should be. Indeed, the ideals and practices of Euro-American kinship can be observed in the internal workings of government social work offices and NGOs themselves, often alongside Tswana ideals and practices of kinship. Unlike Tswana kinship, Euro-American understandings of family tend to underestimate the creative potential of conflict and crisis, and instead seek to avoid or incontrovertibly resolve familial problems. This thesis argues that many of the frustrations and failures that government and NGO programmes in Botswana face may be traced back to this mismatch in kinship ideals and practices; and it suggests that those entanglements are slowly creating significant change in Tswana families, which may vastly outweigh the effects of the AIDS epidemic itself.

For my parents

In memoriam
Dirang 'Shima' Moseki
Tsholo Mantle

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| List of Figures | 10 |
| Acknowledgments | 11 |
| Glossary of Setswana Terms | 17 |
| Introduction | 21 |
| Botswana: ‘Africa’s Miracle’ in a Time of AIDS..... | 27 |
| Anthropological Ancestors and Antecedents..... | 33 |
| Fieldwork: Context and Methods..... | 45 |
| Dithaba..... | 45 |
| On Being Family..... | 48 |
| On Intervening, and Recollecting..... | 56 |
| Investigating Conflict..... | 58 |
| Chapter Summaries..... | 61 |
| A Note on Style..... | 66 |

Chapter One

“Where are You From? Where are You Going?”: The Geographies of Tswana Kinship.....71

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Ko Gae</i> : House and Home..... | 74 |
| Going Up and Down: Tefo’s Beating, Dipuo’s Dalliances..... | 85 |
| “ <i>Ke a Aga</i> ”: Lorato, Building..... | 92 |
| Getting In, Taking Out: The Geographies of Intervention..... | 102 |
| Conclusion..... | 110 |

Chapter Two

“Who is Taking Care of Your Things?”: Care, Contribution and Conflict in the Economies of Kinship113

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Pot is Being Cooked at the Cattlepost: Children of One Womb.... | 123 |
| Cattle | 123 |
| Food..... | 129 |
| Taking What Belongs to You: Self-Making..... | 139 |
| I am a Man: Thabo’s Outburst..... | 139 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Women's Things: <i>Motshelo</i> | 144 |
| Intervening Care..... | 151 |
| Conclusion..... | 158 |
| Chapter Three | |
| "We Are Seeing Things": Managing Recognition and Risk in Reproducing Kinship..... | 161 |
| Negotiating Pregnancy..... | 169 |
| Negotiating Marriage..... | 181 |
| Reproducing Kinship in a Time of AIDS..... | 190 |
| Conclusion..... | 198 |
| Chapter Four | |
| "They Were Far Family": Circulating Children, Differentiating Kin..... | 199 |
| "She Couldn't Give me Two Pula": Staying with Distant Kin..... | 205 |
| "Living Outside": Staying with Non-Kin..... | 212 |
| Children in Need of Care: Formal Foster Parenting..... | 221 |
| Conclusion..... | 229 |
| Chapter Five | |
| "We Show People We are Together": Producing Persons, Families, Villages, and the <i>Morafe</i>..... | 233 |
| The Village in the Home: A Party..... | 239 |
| Lifting Up Culture: An Initiation Homecoming..... | 252 |
| Conclusion..... | 265 |
| Chapter Six | |
| Creating Kin: Families, Nations, and Transnational Organisations..... | 267 |
| Stuck in the Office: Social Work | 273 |
| Home Visits: Non-Governmental Organisations..... | 282 |
| An Opening Ceremony, Revisited..... | 290 |
| Conclusion..... | 301 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Conclusion | |
| “We Have a Problem”: The Ordinary Crisis of Kinship..... | 303 |
| Bibliography..... | 322 |

List of Figures

Maps

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Map of Botswana..... | 29 |
|----------------------|----|

Charts

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| The Legae Family..... | 53 |
| Bonolo's first family chart..... | 216 |
| Bonolo's second family chart..... | 217 |

Images and Photographs

| | |
|--|-----|
| Arriving home..... | 71 |
| <i>Masimo</i> (the lands)..... | 79 |
| Building..... | 95 |
| Lorato's house..... | 101 |
| <i>Motshelo</i> invitation..... | 144 |
| Behaviour change campaigns targeting risk..... | 194 |
| Preparing the meal..... | 242 |
| Party guests sit at the edge of the <i>lelwapa</i> | 248 |
| The <i>mophato</i> returns..... | 259 |
| The opening ceremony..... | 267 |

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Glossary of Setswana Terms

Setswana is pronounced much as it is written, with a few exceptions (Matumo 1993):

‘e’ may be pronounced either as *ey* in *they*, e.g. *malome*; or as *e* in *there*, e.g. *akere*.

‘g’ is pronounced like *ch* in *loch*, e.g. *gae*

‘i’ is pronounced *ee* as in *deep*, e.g. *masimo*

‘kg’ is pronounced as a guttural *k*; *dikgang* is therefore *dee-KHang*.

‘ng’ is pronounced like *ng* in *sing*, e.g. *ngaka*

‘o’ is pronounced either as *o* in *boat*, e.g. *motse*; or as *oo* in *fool*, e.g. *motho*.

‘th’ is pronounced as an aspirated *t* as in *take*; e.g. *motho*

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>(go) aga</i> | to build |
| <i>akere</i> | right? isn’t it? |
| <i>Ao!</i> | (interjection) expression of surprise |
| <i>bagolo</i> | elders |
| <i>balwapeng</i> | family (lit. people of the household or courtyard) |
| <i>bana ba motho</i> | siblings (lit. children of a person) |
| <i>bana ba mmaboipelego</i> | children of the social worker (often used for orphans) |
| <i>banyana</i> | girls |
| <i>basadi</i> | see <i>mosadi</i> |
| <i>batsadi</i> | see <i>motsadi</i> |
| <i>Batswana</i> | Tswana people |
| <i>bongwanake</i> | my children |
| <i>botho</i> | personhood; connotes dignity, respectfulness, humane behaviour |
| <i>dikatso</i> | tips; alms |
| <i>dikgang</i> | see <i>kgang</i> |
| <i>dingaka</i> | see <i>ngaka</i> |
| <i>ee</i> | yes |
| <i>gae</i> | home, or home village |
| <i>ko gae</i> | at home (referring to one’s natal home or home village) |
| <i>ga re itse (ga ke itse)</i> | we don’t know (I don’t know) |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>(go) ithwala</i> | to be pregnant (lit. to carry oneself) |
| <i>(go) itirela</i> | to self-make; to do for oneself |
| <i>hei! / haish! / heela!</i> | (interjections) hey!; expressions of surprise, insistence, fatigue |
| <i>ija!/ijo!/iya!</i> | (interjections) expressions of surprise, annoyance, or sympathy |
| <i>isong</i> | fireplace, hearth, or outdoor kitchen |
| <i>kana</i> | (interjection) actually, incidentally |
| <i>kagisanyo</i> | harmony |
| <i>kagiso</i> | peace |
| <i>kgang</i> (pl. <i>dikgang</i>) | issue, problem; topic of discussion, argument or earnest debate; a |
| | disputed question or contention; also news. |
| <i>kgaoganya</i> | to share out, separate, or resolve |
| <i>kgokgontsho ya bana</i> | child abuse |
| <i>kgosi</i> | chief |
| <i>kgotla</i> | customary court or tribal administration |
| <i>ko lwapeng</i> | in the <i>lelwapa</i> ; at home |
| <i>kwa ga...</i> | at the place of |
| <i>lelwapa</i> (pl. <i>malwapa</i>) | courtyard; house; family |
| <i>ko lwapeng</i> | in the courtyard/at home (referring to the yard one stays in) |
| <i>lesika</i> (pl. <i>masika</i>) | relative, family; also vein, artery |
| <i>lobola</i> | bridewealth |
| <i>lorato</i> | love |
| <i>malome</i> | uncle (specifically, mother's brother) |
| <i>malwapa</i> | see <i>lelwapa</i> |
| <i>masika</i> | see <i>lesika</i> |
| <i>masimo</i> | farmlands |
| <i>medumo</i> (sing. <i>modumo</i>) | noise; disturbances |
| <i>mephato</i> | see <i>mophato</i> |
| <i>merafe</i> | see <i>morafe</i> |
| <i>metshelo</i> | see <i>motshelo</i> |
| <i>mmago/mmagwe</i> | mother of |

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>mma malome</i> | uncle's wife; also female uncle |
| <i>monna</i> | man/husband |
| <i>monna wa me</i> | my man, my husband |
| <i>mophato</i> (pl. <i>mephato</i>) | age regiment |
| <i>morafe</i> (pl. <i>merafe</i>) | tribe, nation |
| <i>moraka</i> | cattlepost |
| <i>mosadi</i> (pl. <i>batsadi</i>) | woman |
| <i>motsadi</i> (pl. <i>batsadi</i>) | parent |
| <i>motse</i> | village |
| <i>motsetse</i> | confinement |
| <i>motshelo</i> (pl. <i>metshelo</i>) | savings group |
| <i>Motswana</i> | Tswana person (singular) |
| <i>mxm!</i> | (interjection) expression of annoyance, frustration or derision |
| <i>ngaka</i> (pl. <i>dingaka</i>) | traditional doctor |
| <i>ngwana</i> | child |
| <i>nkuku</i> | grandmother |
| <i>nna</i> | me, I |
| <i>nnyaa</i> | no |
| <i>puo</i> | conversation, discussion (of difficult matters); a case to be tried |
| <i>rrago/rragwe</i> | father of |
| <i>seabe</i> | a portion given; a share |
| <i>segotlo</i> | backyard |
| <i>seswaa</i> | stewed and shredded meat |
| <i>Setswana</i> | the language and culture of the Tswana |
| <i>tirisanyo mmogo</i> | co-operation; working together |
| <i>tlakwanyo</i> | come here |
| <i>tlhokomelo</i> | care |
| <i>(go) tsamaya</i> | to go |
| <i>wena</i> | you |

Introduction

“*Ao!* Does this person have no manners? Doesn’t she know she should greet us by saying *dumelang*, *batsadi* (hello, my parents)?”

I had just walked into the *lelwapa*, the courtyard in front of the house, greeting everyone with a mumbled *dumelang*, hello. The elderly woman speaking, who sat on the ground with her legs straight out in front of her, was clearly berating me. I’d lived in Botswana for over a year by then, much of that time in the village, but I still knew too little Setswana¹ to understand her reprimand. I stood there looking bewildered.

“*Hei!* You old woman, do you speak English?” A woman about my age, perched on the low courtyard wall, came unexpectedly to my defence. “Why should you expect this one to know Setswana?” The elderly woman looked at the younger – her daughter, it later turned out – grudgingly. Then she shot me a surly look and harrumphed.

I knew the older woman’s teenaged granddaughter, Lorato², from the local orphan care drop-in centre, where I was a volunteer. I knew her son Kagiso, too, who was a driver at the project. I had often walked Lorato and her other friends from the neighbourhood home, right up to their respective gates; and they frequently came to visit me at my home, sometimes staying to eat with me there. I routinely insisted that they check with their families before visiting, and there seemed to be no difficulty. But a few days previously, Lorato’s grandmother had stood outside the tall fence that surrounded the orphan care project and yelled across its open playing areas at some local volunteers, insisting that the lot of us were attempting to ruin her family. No-one responded to her directly, nor asked what her specific concerns were; but it was

¹ ‘Setswana’ refers to the language and cultural practices of the Tswana. ‘Tswana’ is the generic adjective I use throughout this thesis to describe the group of tribes in southern Africa that self-identify, collectively, as Tswana. ‘Botswana’ is the ‘place of the Tswana’, and ‘Batswana’ are Tswana people (sing. ‘Motswana’).

² All of the names in this thesis are pseudonyms, unless noted otherwise.

taken as a very serious allegation – something that might be broached at the *kgotla*, or customary court. “*Ke kgang*,” a friend at the project, trained as a social worker, noted; it’s an issue. He suggested that as the person closest to Lorato, I should pay her family a visit. “Get inside the gate,” he specified. “Otherwise she will be even more insulted.”

That first visit, in the gathering summer of 2004, was brief and uncomfortable. When Lorato translated the interchange for me later, I thought it odd that her grandmother – whose name was Mmapula – should insist that I call her ‘parent’, especially given her evident displeasure with me and the organisation in which I worked. I assumed it was a generic means of demanding respect from one’s juniors. But in the years that followed, I very seldom heard the greeting, except among kin at weddings and funerals; and no-one else ever required it of me.

After that initial visit, I slowly got to know Lorato’s kin, the Legae family. I began to visit regularly, at first just to sit quietly with them, later to chat a little or play with the children. Lorato’s aunts began visiting me, often bringing the children with them, especially on their way out to or back from the family’s farming lands. In time, I was invited to attend weddings with them, and then funerals; I went to the lands with them and helped with the harvest. Later on, the older children were sent to stay with me during their exams, or to help me at home. I began to wonder whether, in our first meeting, Mmapula hadn’t been making a specific claim on me: whether she wasn’t demanding acknowledgement and respect as Lorato’s parent in her own right, but also drawing me into a web of kin obligations by claiming recognition as *my* parent. Either way, we both gradually came to take that claim seriously.

In late 2005, I moved on to a job with Social Services, co-ordinating non-governmental organisations (NGOs) nationwide that served children orphaned by Botswana’s AIDS pandemic. But at the same time, under Mmapula’s tutelage, I came to critically reconsider the discourses of family breakdown, and of the neglect and abuse of orphaned children, that dominated the NGO and government spheres in which I worked. My experience of the Legae family – tragically affected, but by no

means ruined by AIDS – motivated a long-term engagement with questions about the actual effects of the epidemic, the resilience of kinship, and the rationales and legacies of government and non-governmental intervention that shaped my personal and professional life until I left Botswana in 2008. And it was the persistence of those questions that led eventually to the research project upon which this thesis is based.

Drawing on fifteen months' fieldwork between 2011 and 2013, this thesis undertakes to provide an ethnographic account of contemporary Tswana kinship. In it, I show that all of those practices that define and produce the Tswana family – from living, eating and working together, to contributing to one another's care, to managing a household together; from forming intimate relationships, bearing and raising children, and negotiating marriage, to coming of age, holding parties, and burying the dead – simultaneously produce risk, conflict and crisis, or *dikgang* (sing. *kgang*), that seem to threaten it. *Dikgang* range from minor misunderstandings, to heated arguments over neglected responsibilities, to unspoken jealousies; from negotiating fines to managing the risks of bewitchment; from problems anticipated in the future, to those left hanging from the past. They are events, sometimes acts, but also processes; they are moments of crisis, but with lengthy histories and ongoing legacies of attempted resolution. They need constantly to be addressed in the right ways by the right people; and who ought to address what, how, is not simply prescribed by age, generation and gender, but establishes relative authority and reworks interfamilial relationships in turn.

Of course, efforts to negotiate *dikgang* are equally fraught and uncertain. Even where a decisive intervention can be made, it is often only temporary; it may exacerbate or escalate misunderstandings; and it may introduce whole new conflicts among kin who have been involved, and others besides. *Dikgang* are seldom, if ever, resolved; and they inevitably produce further *dikgang* in their turn. Tswana kinship, in other words, is generated and experienced as a continuous cycle of conflict and irresolution. It creates and thrives on crisis. And in this sense, *dikgang* are not simply breakdowns in or failures of kinship: they are a critical means of constituting and

sustaining it. Especially in a structurally fluid kinship system like that of the Tswana (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 137), the ongoing negotiation of *dikgang* charts the limits of family, defines different modes of relatedness within it, and establishes specific relationships between it and the extra-familial ‘public’ sphere as well. More than this, it enables the family to adapt with surprising responsiveness to emergent crises like that of the AIDS epidemic, and to assert some degree of continuity through their duration.

Each of the chapters that follow engages with specific means of making family among the Tswana, and draws out the *dikgang* that characterise, complicate, and ultimately contribute to them. These *dikgang*, however, are not necessarily exclusive to the Tswana. I suggest that they emerge from deep-rooted tensions in kinship structure and practice that may be recognisable in a wide range of other ethnographic contexts as well. It is not only in Botswana that families are expected to persist indefinitely while accommodating both massive socio-political change and the no less tumultuous upheavals involved in family members’ acquisition of personhood, the incorporation of new relationships, the shifting of generational responsibilities, and so on. As I will discuss in further detail later in this Introduction, in many places families are meant to stay together, though there is risk and even danger in that intimacy; and at the same time, they often need to come apart to incorporate their own growth and reproduction. Families need to include and exclude (sometimes the same people), to share and to separate, to display and conceal; they are both intimate and political, public and private. And yet, in spite of the tensions and contradictions with which kinship is laden, we expect holism and harmony from families; as Michael Lambek (2013) puts it, “it fall[s] to kinship to symbolize or evoke a wholeness that is always already compromised or lost” (2013: 243).

I suggest that kinship, both as ideal and practice, straddles a series of competing – even opposed – relational and ethical imperatives, many of which run at cross-purposes. Being family requires that these contradictory and mutually disruptive demands be kept in delicate balance; and that balance is often upset, and needs continuous recalibrating. Conflict and crisis, I argue, emerge at moments when the

balance is upset; and efforts at negotiating, suspending, or resolving conflict are one ongoing means of recalibration. Conflict and its negotiation, in this sense, becomes not simply an unfortunate exception to the rule of kinship harmony, but a key factor in the flexibility and persistence of kinship. In exploring the specific tensions arising in Tswana kinship structure and practice, I invite comparison with such tensions in other ethnographic contexts as well; and I contend that conflict and crisis form a particularly useful lens through which to understand kinship broadly.

My appearance in the Legae household as an object of *kgang* foreshadows another trend with which this thesis is concerned: the widespread involvement of extra-familial agencies – governmental, non-governmental, and transnational – in the Tswana family, an involvement that has increased sharply since the onset of Botswana's AIDS epidemic. I suggest that the circumstances under which these agencies intervene in families, the ways in which they are drawn in, kept out, and otherwise managed, and the repercussions of their interventions are all linked to *dikgang*, and create further *dikgang* of their own. Does the involvement of such agencies simply serve to sustain and reproduce the *status quo* of kinship in a time of crisis, as language used by NGOs and government policy alike suggests? Or does it introduce changes in the practice and experience of family? How do the effects of intervention compare to the effects of the AIDS epidemic itself?

In the following chapters, I explore those dimensions of managing *dikgang* within the family, or between the family and extra-familial agencies, that stretch back well before Botswana's time of AIDS – such as calling kin together in mediation, or drawing in the *kgotla*; and I investigate those dimensions that may mark change – such as the heightened stakes presented by potential infidelity, or the awkward presence in the family of a foreign, one-time project volunteer like myself. From among the vast array of agencies with which families interact – the police, clinics, schools, *kgotla*, government agencies for water, agriculture, or development, churches, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) spanning support groups, home-based care, preschools, rights advocates, 'orphan centres', and many more – I

focus primarily on two that have become especially influential in Botswana's time of AIDS: orphan care projects, and social work offices.

Having spent over four years working with both such agencies before my doctoral research, I became sharply aware of how unpredictable – even deleterious – their programming can be in its effects, and how prone to failure, much to the frustration of the often highly-dedicated people who deliver it. I argue that such mixed results are due in part to the alienation of these agencies from Tswana kinship practice, and their misreading of *dikgang* in particular. And I suggest that this alienation stems from a profusion of divergent kinship ideals and practices that become entangled with one another in the context of the agencies' work. To the extent that both their internal workings and the relationships between these agencies are predicated upon and saturated with kinship practices, that superfluity of kinships interferes with agencies' abilities to meaningfully access and influence Tswana families, and constrains their everyday management as well. As I will show over the course of this thesis, not only do such programmes generally fail to alleviate *dikgang* in families, they frequently create additional, highly complex *dikgang* involving a range of actors who are otherwise disengaged from family and cannot easily be absorbed into its conflict mediation processes (ranging from social workers to foreign volunteers, to policy-makers and the heads of donor agencies, for example). In their scope and complexity, such *dikgang* often outstrip and undermine the family's ability to respond. And in the process, these *dikgang* gradually rework relationships between the home and the village, the family and the community, the sphere of kinship and the sphere of politics – another major theme with which this thesis is preoccupied.

In the next sections, I explore the context in which these arguments unfold – first ethnographically, in the context of Botswana; and then analytically, in the context of the anthropological literature relevant to the themes I tackle. I then turn to a description of the specific setting of my research, and the methods used in pursuing the argument outlined above, before sketching a map for the chapters that follow.

Botswana: 'Africa's Miracle' in a Time of AIDS

Botswana is a landlocked, sparsely populated country in the heart of southern Africa, and takes pride in an international reputation for peace, stability and good governance. It has become commonplace to describe the country as 'Africa's miracle', especially in light of its rapid rise to prosperity after achieving independence from Britain in 1966 and the subsequent discovery of diamonds. And yet, Botswana has struggled persistently with some of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world (UNAIDS 2013a) – an apparent anomaly in its otherwise auspicious tale. The unusual combination of a stable government and economy, strong political engagement, and a disastrous epidemic has drawn floods of resources – funds, personnel, infrastructure, organisations and programmes of every stripe – into the country for perhaps twenty-five years. In that time, Botswana has produced responses to AIDS globally recognised as 'best practice', including the free public provision of anti-retroviral treatment (UNAIDS 2003); and yet infection rates continue nearly unabated (UNAIDS 2013b). In this section I provide a brief historical and socio-political background of Botswana to contextualise this ostensible conundrum, and set the scene for the analytical themes through which I approach it.

Botswana's relative success is often linked to the unique circumstances of its colonisation. Aware of Cecil Rhodes' ambitions in the region, the dispossession of chiefs and the maltreatment of their people occurring under the auspices of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in South Africa and Rhodesia, the Tswana chiefs chose an unusual tack. In 1895, the Three *Dikgosi* (chiefs), as they were to be known afterwards – representing the three most powerful tribes of the area that comprises contemporary Botswana – travelled to England in the company of missionaries from the London Missionary Society. They put a request to Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, that Bechuanaland (as it was known) be made a Protectorate of the British Empire, governed directly from London rather than by Rhodes' BSAC. When Chamberlain refused, the chiefs undertook a highly successful tour of England, campaigning at churches and public events. They garnered the support of temperance groups, anti-slavery and humanitarian groups, and many of

the churches themselves, which lobbied Chamberlain to reconsider his position. Concerned that it might become an election issue, he did – on the condition that the chiefs cede land necessary for Rhodes' railway to pass through, and that they accept the introduction of taxes (Sillery 1974; Tlou and Campbell 1984).

I do not mean to suggest, in this potted history, that Batswana were not affected by colonisation. Its legacies, and those of the ambitious missionisation attendant upon it, are evident everywhere: in Botswana's government structures, in its parallel systems of customary and common law, its history of labour migration to South Africa, the disappearance of initiation rites, changes to bridewealth payments, and much of its education, health, and social welfare provision (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Griffiths 1997; Schapera 1933, 1940, 1970). But the strategic foresight of the Three Chiefs, combined with the impression that Bechuanaland was little more than an arid desert, spared the nascent nation some of the more egregious violence, rapacious resource-stripping, and racist political landscaping that characterised the experience of other colonies in the region. And certainly their intervention is understood by Batswana as a defining moment in the history of the nation (one of the country's few monuments, *The Three Dikgosi*, was raised to them). The influential role of churches and humanitarian groups in this tale speaks to the long-term involvement of international civil society in the country's politics, extending well prior to the current spate of NGO programmes.

At Independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world. However, diamonds were discovered shortly thereafter, and Botswana is currently the world's largest producer of diamonds by value (Krawitz 2013). The country has taken a strongly state-led approach to development on the back of the diamond industry, with no small success (Taylor 2004: 53-4). Until the global economic downturn of 2009, its diamond revenues were sufficient for the country to avoid dealings with the World Bank or International Monetary Fund altogether, and thereby to sidestep the economic and political legacies of insupportable debt and structural adjustment that have plagued many other African countries since the 1980s.



Map of Botswana. (Source: www.nationsonline.org)

Perhaps appropriately, the major thoroughfares of Botswana – built on the proceeds of the diamond trade – trace a rough diamond between larger settlements scattered thinly around the edge of the country, avoiding for the most part the driest expanses of the Kgalagadi (Kalahari) desert at its heart (see map). Gaborone, the capital, stands at the southern tip of the diamond; the most-travelled highway follows Rhodes’ railway north-east from Gaborone to Francistown on the border with Zimbabwe, running parallel to the South African border. From Francistown, the highway runs north-west to Maun, a major tourist destination on the world’s only

inland delta, the Okavango; and a branch jogs up to Kasane, on the border with Zambia, the main transport route north. From Maun the highway cuts south-west to Gantsi, near the border with Namibia and in the Kgalagadi proper; and from there it runs south-east again, to complete the circuit.

The building of roads and opening of trade routes gradually stimulated what seemed, on the face of it, to be a major urbanisation of the country. Gaborone, Botswana's capital, was one of the fastest growing cities in Africa when I first arrived there in 2003 (Branko et al. 2003). And yet, at month ends and on major holidays, the city would become a ghost town. "No-one is *from* Gaborone," friends and colleagues would commonly remark; "we have to go home." The capital city had the best opportunities for work, and people might live and even raise families there; but their home villages were the places to which they returned, in which they had rights to free residential plots and in which they built, near which their livestock and farms were kept, and in which they made the bulk of their investments and plans for the future. And this was true for men and women, even when married (though the man's home village might enjoy some priority). While census statistics show a trend towards urbanisation in Botswana (RoB 2015: Table 1.6) – much as they do elsewhere in Africa – and while cities, towns, and even 'urban villages' have grown rapidly, the numbers belie the mobility and multiplicity of residence that most Botswana take for granted, as well as the ways that both change over the life course. Both urbanisation and mobility, of course, have figured heavily in mainstream public health explanations for the spread of AIDS, in Botswana and elsewhere (e.g. UNAIDS 2001) – though as I will suggest in this thesis, there may be ways in which contemporary Tswana patterns of residence and movement echo historical ones in absorbing crisis, as much as producing it.

My work with the Department of Social Services took me to all corners of the country, including many of the villages my urban-dwelling contemporaries called home, and some of Botswana's most remote locations. Far from the main highways, Botswana's growing income gap – at latest count, nearly 20% of the population still live in poverty (World Bank 2015) – was most evident in these smaller settlements;

and so too was the government's role in providing for virtually all of a community's needs, from clinics and schools and water, to housing and food (not unproblematically; see Durham 2002b and Motzafi-Haller 2002, for more on the racialised politics of citizenship). Some of the details that emerge in the stories that follow are drawn together from these places, far away from my main fieldsite as they were (a point to which I return below). However, eight major tribes are recognised in Botswana (with many smaller tribes besides; MRG 2009), and – notwithstanding the government's well-established discourse of unity (Gulbrandsen 2012) – there are sharp differences among them, in everything from language to foods, housing materials to witchcraft practice, and historical interactions with other groups contemporarily separated by national borders. My fieldsite stood in the country's more highly-populated southeast – much as did the fieldsites of Isaac Schapera, John and Jean Comaroff, Julie Livingston, Fred Klaits, and Bianca Dahl, whose work I draw upon here – and I have only incorporated those details from far-flung places that fit the context of my fieldsite as well. I return below to a more detailed description of my fieldsite itself.

Botswana's first case of AIDS was reported in 1985, and by the early 1990s the spread of the disease had reached epidemic proportions (UNAIDS 2013b). In its first stages especially, AIDS was often framed as a threat to the survival of the nation, both in terms of reversing its developmental gains and facing its citizenry with extinction (LaGuardia 2000; RoB 2005b: 2). The fear of devastation was not altogether unfounded: even by 2004 infection rates were estimated at 37.9% among adults, and in a country of 1.6 million people, 33,000 people are thought to have died of AIDS in that year alone (UNAIDS 2004). The introduction of testing centres in 2000, and publicly funded anti-retroviral treatment in 2002 – which now reaches 87% of those who require it – significantly reduced mortality rates (NACA 2014: 23). Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) initiatives were introduced as early as 1999, and now enjoy a 96% uptake and nearly 98% success rate (*ibid.*: 22, 26). In spite of the enormous success of these interventions, infection rates have declined only moderately to 21.9% of the adult population (UNAIDS 2013b; though this reduction can as easily be attributed to changes in statistical

collection methods – compare UNAIDS 2004: 2; NACA 2010a: 10); and the rate of annual new infections continues to be high (UNAIDS 2013b). The number of children orphaned by AIDS – sufficiently high to be classified a national crisis by 2004, and recently estimated at 96,000 children nationwide (UNAIDS 2013b) – also continues to rise.

While fears of extinction have faded, and the availability of treatment has rendered AIDS a chronic, manageable disease, the pandemic's persistent spread still grounds popular and professional concern about overburdened systems of care – in particular, the extended family. Hundreds of local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international agencies, foreign governments, public and private donors have rushed into this purported vacuum of care over the past two decades, with the support and encouragement of the Botswana government. The government runs wide-reaching programmes in treatment, home-based care, and orphan care; and parallel NGO initiatives in the same areas have mushroomed. During my time at Social Services, I identified over two hundred NGOs working with orphaned and vulnerable children alone. As we have seen above, a hyperactive and influential civil society is not entirely new to Botswana, nor is an interventionist model of governance. But with the advent of AIDS, I suggest, government and NGOs alike have sought a degree of access to and influence in the family that is unprecedented. In the context of successful treatment efforts, I argue, perhaps the greatest effects of the epidemic on families lie in these interventions. The fact that the interventions themselves produce such mixed effects, are so prone to frustration and failure, and have had such apparently limited influence on the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic, suggests that they have also misread the apparent conundrum of Botswana's epidemiological situation and continue to be stymied by it. While I do not pretend to offer a conclusive answer to Botswana's AIDS riddle in this thesis, I do hope to offer a slightly different means of framing it: as an 'ordinary' crisis, with ample precedent (and perhaps overlooked coping potential) in Tswana kinship practice.

Botswana, then, presents a compelling context in which to explore the subtler socio-political dynamics of the epidemic and interventions launched in response – and to challenge the often reductionist public health discourse around the causes, contributing factors and effects of the epidemic, particularly as they relate to families. To frame my challenge to that discourse, I turn next to a consideration of relevant anthropological literature on Botswana, kinship, and AIDS, and situate my research within it.

Anthropological Ancestors and Antecedents

This thesis seeks to build upon a rich legacy of anthropology among the Tswana, dating back to the work of Isaac Schapera in the colonial era. Taking Schapera's cue, the bulk of this literature is preoccupied with cultural loss, crisis and social change (see, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Dahl 2009a, 2009b; Durham 2004; Livingston 2005; Schapera 1933, 1940: preface, 1970). These analytical concerns condense around apparent volatility in Tswana understandings and experience of youth, old age, generations and the life cycle (Burke 2000; Durham 2000, 2004, 2006; Ingstad 2004; Klaitz 2005; Livingston 2003, 2005, 2008; Schapera 1933, 1940); related questions of personhood, self-making, and subjectivity figure heavily as well (Alverson 1978; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Durham 1995, 2002a; Livingston 2005; Suggs 2002). Change is also charted extensively in local legal and political practice (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997; Griffiths 1997; Gulbrandsen 1995, 1996, 2012; Kuper 1975; Schapera 1938, 1963, 1970) including civil society (Dahl 2009a; Durham 1997; Werbner 2014), latterly with a focus on questions of ethnicity and citizenship (Durham 2002b; Motzafi-Haller 2002; Werbner 2004; Wilmsen 2002). Kinship was a critical concern from the outset (Kuper 1975; Schapera 1933, 1940, 1950) – as was the relationship between kinship and politics, in the structuralist sense of taking the former as a substitute or predicate of the latter (Kuper 1975; Schapera 1963, 1973). However, kinship and its relationship to political practice have taken something of a back seat in more recent research, especially since the onset of AIDS. Recent anthropological work, conducted

primarily among churches (Klaits 2010), clinics (Livingston 2008, 2010), and community-based organisations (Dahl 2009a; Durham 2002; Livingston 2005) has generated a vibrant and compelling conversation around care, health, moral sentiment, and the politics of humanitarian intervention, among other topics. And many of these topics bear special relevance to kinship. But where the family features in this research, it is approached from the perspective of extra-familial institutions (Dahl 2009a; Livingstone 2005; Klaits 2010). This thesis seeks to contribute to these ongoing conversations by re-situating them around an ethnographic account of the lived experience of contemporary Tswana kinship.

Tswana kinship has posed an anomalous case for the region, and for the descent-based models of kinship that dominated early anthropological work there, from the outset. Indeed, drawing on Schapera's work, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown concluded that the Tswana were "decidedly exceptional in Africa" (1950: 69). Inheritance and succession to office seemed to fit a patrilineal model of descent, and village wards were roughly patrilocal. But the Tswana were endogamous; marriage between parallel cousins – that is, *within* a given patriline – was permitted, even desirable (though sibling terms were used for these relationships; Schapera 1940: 41-43; 1950: 151-2). Over time, the preference "produced a field of contradictory and ambiguous ties" which may be "*at once* agnatic, matrilineal, and affinal" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 138, italics in original). Patrilineal relationships – expected to be fraught with competition and rivalry – were thereby conflated with matrilineal relationships, supposed to be characterised by affection and support. Lineages became tangled and indeterminate, and relationships could be entirely re-aligned through marriage (Kuper 1975) – a process which was itself highly indeterminate and changeable (Comaroff and Roberts 1977; see Chapter Three). John and Jean Comaroff have extended this argument to suggest that, rather than structural relationships determining status and behaviour, it worked the other way round: status and behaviour determined one's relationships. Thus, families or individuals with whom one was on more equal footing, and with whom one was in competition, were *therefore* patrilineal kin; those more unequal and non-competitive, *therefore* matrilineal kin, in a highly pragmatic – and implicitly changeable – "cultural

tautology” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 140). The anomalies and fluidities of Tswana kinship structure, in other words, lent themselves readily to analytical re-framing in terms of behaviour, practice and process. Moreover, thanks to echoes from its structural-functionalist past, that reframing at least implicitly prioritised the potential of conflict as a kin-defining trait from the start.

The extent to which Tswana kin relations rely upon and respond to fluctuations in status and behaviour point both to the marked importance of persons in producing Tswana kinship, and to a unique understanding of what personhood might mean and how it is achieved. Both questions have enjoyed anthropological attention, especially since Hoyt Alverson’s (1972) ruminations on consciousness, mind, and self-identity among the Tswana. Latterly, however, building on Alverson’s discussion of *go itirela* – ‘doing-for-oneself’ (1972: 133), working or making (for) oneself – analysis has gravitated more to the processes and practices of making persons than to personhood as a category of thought or being (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 2001; Durham 1995, 2002a; Durham and Klaits 2002; Livingston 2005, 2008; Klaits 2010; contrast Carrithers et al. 1985). Tracing the linguistic root of *itirela*, Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 140-44) gloss these practices as *tiro*, or work – not in terms of alienable labour, but as a creative process of building up the self, as a social person, by “producing [other] people, relations, and things” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 143). *Tiro*, on this model, may involve everything from negotiating marriage and the daily work of sustaining it, to the acquisition and care of cattle or material goods, to the establishment of a wide range of social relations. *Go itirela* – which I have glossed as ‘self-making’, and by which I mean making the self as a person, in keeping with its Tswana usage³ – usefully encompasses the key characteristics of Tswana personhood I explore in this thesis: its emphasis on building and accumulation, its preoccupation with work (which I link to care), and the material, relational and moral dimensions of that accumulation and work as well⁴. Self-making describes personhood in terms of becoming rather than being, through specific sorts

³ With this phrasing, I intend to connote the emic Tswana notion of *go itirela*, and not Foucault’s techniques of the self (Foucault 1997).

⁴ See Livingston 2008 for a discussion of *botho* – lit. personhood, but understood as a powerful moral injunction, and an intersubjective ethic and practice of humaneness.

of everyday practice rather than fixed terms of status or office, as practices that are for the self but also extend the self through a wide series of interdependencies (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; cf. Fortes 1973). At the same time, its perpetually processual nature means self-making is prone to attack, blockage and even reversal, whether by misfortune or witchcraft; and as a result, the Tswana must conceal, “fragment and refract the self” in defense, rendering it partible (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275-6; see also Durham 2002a; Klaitz 2010; Livingston 2005; compare Strathern 1988; Wagner 1991). In other words, self-making usefully echoes the multiplicity, fluidity, and indeterminacy evident in Tswana kinship; and, like kinship, it is inherently characterised by risk, potential crisis, and the necessity of careful negotiation – or *dikgang*. In this thesis, I explore the ways that kinship is both produced in and constrained by self-making, and the ways that the imperative to self-make both relies on and disrupts kinship in turn – establishing a tense interdependency that makes kinship and self-making together critical means of understanding the generative adaptabilities of *dikgang*.

By choosing to focus on *dikgang*, or conflict and crisis, I have sought to question the sometimes overt, sometimes subtle, but nevertheless persistent assumption that harmony, unconditional affection and reciprocal care are – and should be – the defining characteristics of kinship. Whether in Fortes’ “axiom of amity” (Fortes 1969), Schneider’s “enduring, diffuse solidarity” (Schneider 1980: 50) or Sahlins’ more recent “mutuality of being” (Sahlins 2012), a “sentimentalised view of sociality as sociability and of kinship (‘family’) as community...pervades much EuroAmerican commentary of an *academic* kind” (Edwards and Strathern 2000:152, original emphasis; compare the link Stasch makes between the kinship literature and Tönnies’s *Gemeinschaft*, 2009: 6). This sentimentality tends to obscure “the dark side of kinship” (Geschiere 2003): gendered dynamics of power and hierarchy, constraint and control; violence, witchcraft, and abuse; or, as I hope to show here, conflict and crisis. And to the extent it does recognise this ‘dark side’, it assumes that it is the result of a structural flaw (e.g. Gluckman 1956; Turner 1957) and that kinship should be structured and practised explicitly to avoid or circumvent it (e.g. Stasch 2009: 2). I suggest that these sentimentalised accounts of kinship not only

miss a critical dimension of the experience of family, but tend to perpetuate arbitrary separations between the spheres of kinship and politics (among others), sidelining important means of tracing connections and influences between the two – a point to which we will return below.

At the same time, I have set out to illustrate something more than simply that kinship has a dark side. I aim to describe something more than the ambivalence of kinship (Peletz 2001; see also Lambek 2011); something more than dynamics of distancing and othering that might create kin, which Rupert Stasch (2009) has set out convincingly; and something more than the danger of intimacy, especially among kin, that Peter Geschiere (2003) has described in his surveys of witchcraft – though I draw inspiration from all of these perspectives. As indicated at the outset of this Introduction, I want to push these arguments one step further, by suggesting that kinship is uniquely distinguished by irreconcilable tensions (between the need both to keep people together and to keep them apart, for example, or between the necessity and risk of intimacy, or the ideal and reality of family experience); that these irreconcilable tensions almost inevitably produce conflict and crisis; and that conflict and crisis are the primary means of negotiating those tensions and continually striking balances between them, thereby asserting continuity in kinship practice while simultaneously adapting it to change. Not only do we see “the truth of social relations in events of disruption” (Stasch 2009: 17), including conflict and crisis, then; but those events, and the practices in which they are couched, provide crucial opportunities for adapting and sustaining social relations in their turn. In other words, conflict and crisis are not simply unfortunate things that happen to families and are best avoided; they are continuously *produced* by kinship, and *produce* kinship in turn, crucial elements in its persistence, adaptability and pervasive social resonance.

Of course, an ethnographic interest in conflict is not unprecedented in the literature on Southern Africa. Max Gluckman and the Manchester School after him – most notably Victor Turner – were preoccupied with the dynamics of social conflict (Gluckman 1956; Turner 1957). Both authors traced conflict to contradictory

principles of social structure, especially in systems of kinship and marriage; and both concerned themselves with the ways in which these contradictions were exacerbated by global processes of socio-political and economic change. Both explored conflict and its resolutions primarily in terms of practice, and recognised the creative potential of tension and conflict. To this extent, the argument of my thesis takes inspiration from their work.

There is, however, a latent structural-functionalist bent to these arguments. Both Gluckman and Turner linked conflict exclusively to the principles of social structure, the differentiation and opposition of certain roles, and the struggles for status that emerge therefrom. Gluckman (1956) made the case that custom both establishes and resolves structural contradictions, thereby producing social order and cohesion (and continuity, notwithstanding social change). Turner (1957), too, emphasised symbolic resolution and group unity as outcomes of social conflict – though he made more room for dynamism, reinvention, and new syntheses of social relations, as well as for fission. While conflict in the context of the Tswana family certainly has structural and symbolic dimensions, I suggest they lie rather in its profound ambiguities – emerging not because its constituent parts are differentiated and opposed, but because they are interchangeable, merged, and shifting. Further, as I demonstrate in this thesis, conflict emerges from tensions in kinship process, practice, and lived experience, as much as from tensions in kinship structure and principles; and while those conflicts are actively negotiated, I suggest that their unique social salience lies in the fact that they typically go *unresolved*, symbolically or otherwise.

Gluckman (1956) suggests that conflicts between people in one sphere can only be resolved by their involvement in other, cross-cutting and offsetting, allegiances (whether to age-groups, political groups, or ritual associations, for example). Turner's (1957: Chapter 10) further contention is that irreconcilable differences – whether between people, or between contradictory principles of social structure – can ultimately *only* be resolved in ritual, conducted by cult associations that stretch across and beyond the social groups implicated in conflict or fission. In both cases, conflict is explicitly of the public sphere; both Gluckman and Turner were primarily

interested in its over-arching political forms and effects, which encompassed all of its more particular forms. Here, I suggest that such irreconcilable differences – whether between people or principles – also routinely arise and are addressed exclusively *within* the sphere of kinship, and serve to define it. Further, I suggest that this self-containment, and the irresolution that accompanies it, may be unique to conflicts that arise among kin; and may position Tswana kinship such that it encompasses the political sphere in important and unexpected ways, rather than *vice versa*. In the following chapters, I set out to explore the lived experience of conflict in the domestic sphere of the family. But I also explore ways in which conflict provides a unique means of tracing connections, boundaries, hierarchies and interdependencies between kinship and politics. In other words, I use conflict to draw together spheres that it has previously been used to keep analytically separate.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, I suggest that conflict also provides some unique and complementary perspectives on care, which has formed such a prominent anthropological analytic in understanding Botswana's response to AIDS (Durham 2006; Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005). Care suggests an undoubtedly apt framing for research on families in the context of AIDS, and has produced some insightful perspectives on ways in which kin-like relationships are formed, sustained, and assessed – including with government and NGO actors (Dahl 2009a; Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005). However, it is also the primary terms in which the *failures* of kinship are cast by dominant public health and interventionist narratives. This discourse describes families beset by a 'crisis of care': parents ill and dying, children orphaned, and an intolerable 'burden of care' weighing on extended families (especially grandparents), who are re-cast as 'caregivers' rather than family members. Government policy targets 'children in need of care'; NGOs provide 'supplemental care', and sometimes call their staff 'carers' as well. The discourse has become so pervasive that it often proves difficult to talk about family and care in ways that don't assume it to be an object of concern or breakdown, requiring intervention (see Dahl 2009b) – particularly when speaking with social workers or NGO staff. At the same time, care was neither the defining problematic nor most striking experience of my time in the Legae household – though of course the family

expended great energy caring for one another, their joint property and life projects (as we will see in Chapter Two). Rather, care – like almost every other defining expectation, responsibility, or experience of kinship – produced conflict and crisis; and more than that, it was negotiated through conflict, accessed and even achieved in conflict. It struck me that it might be conflict and crisis, not care, that is analytically prior to and encompassing of the full range of kin-defining dynamics with which this thesis deals. And this framing provided an apt way of connecting to, but defamiliarising, the ‘crisis of care’ that AIDS is assumed to represent – by presenting the possibility that care is routinely subject to and productive of crisis, if in different ways at different times.

AIDS itself forms something of a backdrop to this thesis, rather than a primary analytical concern, and deliberately so. This explicit de-emphasis is intended partly to defamiliarise the powerful assumptions about the causes and legacies of AIDS that affect academic analysis of the epidemic, as much as folk discourse around it; and partly in an effort to be true to the lived experience of the pandemic, as I have understood it from Tswana friends, colleagues, and family over the past decade. Especially since the Botswana government made antiretroviral (ARV) treatment freely available, rendering AIDS a chronic and manageable disease, devastating illness and death are no longer the only nor primary lenses through which Batswana view AIDS – though both are still common experiences of the epidemic (as will emerge in the ethnography to follow). I suggest that Batswana experience AIDS as something contextual and almost peripheral to day-to-day life – even when it is central to the discourses and programming with which they are engaged professionally (as it is with social workers or NGO volunteers), and even when they have had direct experience of it, either for themselves or among family and friends (as most have). I found that HIV and AIDS were curiously insignificant factors in those situations for which one might expect them to be most important: in managing relationships, intimacy, and sex, for example; in managing pregnancy; or in caring for the ill. In the context of widespread public education and well-funded programming that emphasises its urgency, risk and danger, AIDS has been rendered almost banal. In order to investigate what processes may be at work in this rendering,

I have sought in part to reproduce it – by looking at AIDS from the perspective of the daily lived experience of family, rather than looking at the family through the filter of AIDS.

This approach differs somewhat from, and I hope will serve to complement, the now wide-ranging anthropological literature that focuses on AIDS. That literature offers a wealth of analytical approaches to the pandemic, covering questions of discourse, metaphors and significations (Patton 1993; Sontag 1998; Treichler 2006); transnational governmentality, biopolitics and biological citizenship (Biehl 2007, 2004; Comaroff 2007; Farmer 1992; Fassin 2007; Nguyen 2010; Robins 2006); inequalities, economy, and mobility (Dilger et al 2012; Farmer 1999; LeMarcis and Inggs, 2004; Weiss 1996); bodies, medicine & therapy (Dilger et al. 2012; Fassin 2007; LeMarcis 2004; Nguyen 2010; Whyte 2014); death and burial (Dilger 2008; Klaits 2005; Klaits and Durham 2002; Niehaus 2007; Whyte 2005); and more recently, religion and morality (Dahl 2009b; Dilger 2009, 2008; Dilger and Luig, 2010; Klaits 2010, 2005; Prince et al 2009; Prince and Geissler 2010). As noted above, the movement among anthropologists in Botswana to define a coherent local picture of care has offered a fresh take on AIDS in those terms (Klaits 2010; see also Dilger 2010; Henderson 2011; Prince and Marsland 2013: Part Two). It has also provided ways of understanding AIDS not as a public health or behavioural problem, but as a matter of the appropriate management of intersubjective sentiment, or, as Fred Klaits puts it, “a *problem[] of love*” (Klaits 2010: 3, emphasis in original; see also Klaits and Durham 2002; LeMarcis 2012). By decentering AIDS in my account, I have sought to follow this latter interpretive lead.

Kinship and families, however, remain in the background of this literature; and where they appear, they are framed almost exclusively in terms of overburdening, breakdown, collapse and absence – often fixed on the figure of the orphan (Dahl 2009a, 2009b; Dilger 2008, 2010; Fassin 2007: 142-5; Klaits 2010; Wolf 2010). Enlightening as these contributions have been, they have tended to uncritically reproduce the dominant analytical frameworks applied to AIDS by interventionist public health and humanitarian discourse. By taking the breakdown of the family as

read, or the existence of orphans as given rather than socially constructed, they have tended to presuppose their own conclusions (for an important exception to this trend, see Meintjes and Giese 2006). Like the other approaches described above, they have also tended to overlook the more mundane experience of making a life in the context of the epidemic (see Whyte 2014 for a recent exception). By reversing the usual perspective taken in this work, and looking at AIDS through the family, I aim both to unsettle the assumptions of dominant AIDS discourse and, as it were, to re-domesticate our understanding of the disease. I also seek to draw out unexpected social continuities from the cataclysms of the epidemic, thereby filling out the rich anthropological work on social change in the context of AIDS generally, and in Botswana specifically.

In the assumed absence and disintegration of the family, much anthropological work on the effects of AIDS has focused on organisations and institutional settings – particularly NGOs, occasionally clinics, and latterly churches – in place of kin. Organisational interventions mounted to address the pandemic are frequently cast in both humanitarian and development-oriented terms. Providing access to medical treatment, for example, is on one hand an urgent humanitarian issue of saving lives; and on the other, a matter of ensuring the long-term health and productivity of the labour force, without which gains in national development may be lost. These framings suggest productive links to anthropological considerations of both development and humanitarianism. At the same time, such interventions fit neither interpretive framework neatly; and in the absence of analytical links between the two, notwithstanding their striking similarities, many of the subtler dynamics at work go unrecognized. The literature on humanitarianism focuses almost exclusively on battlefields, refugee camps, and disaster zones, and is preoccupied with rupture and emergency, transnational governmentality and the politics of ‘humanity’ and human life (e.g. Fassin 2007b, 2007c, 2009, 2010; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Redfield 2005). In contrast, anthropological literature on development takes for its study questions of infrastructural growth, resources, sustainability and envisioning the future, generally as gradual processes of managed change in less violently afflicted regions (e.g. Ferguson 1994; Mosse 2004; Tsing 2005).

Analytical distinctions between the two fields are blurry and inexplicit – much like the distinctions drawn between humanitarian and development work in practice. Both literatures are preoccupied with questions of governmentality, biopolitics and power, as deployed by an assortment of NGOs, governments, and donors in transnational contexts (Bornstein 2001; Fassin 2007b, 2007c, 2009; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Ferguson 1994; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Mosse and Lewis 2005; Redfield 2005; Tsing 2005). Both take an interest in the systematic delinking of policy, practice, and politics – though this is perhaps more marked in development studies (Ferguson 1994; Mosse 2004) – and the creation of (often incommensurate) communities of knowledge and practice. Both provide new perspectives on the complex relationship of the universal with the particular (Bornstein 2001; Fassin 2010; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Mosse 2004; Tsing 2005), but sometimes tend towards generalised or schematic considerations of human life (e.g. Fassin 2010, 2009) and the apparently irresistible global processes that work to control it (e.g. Ferguson 1994). Both engage the fraught dynamics of giving and receiving, and grapple with the uncomfortable moral motivations and implications of research oriented around the alleviation of suffering and inequality (e.g. Fassin 2008; Gough 1968; Mosse 2006). Perhaps most importantly, both are oriented towards organisations and populations; people, their relationships, actions and voices, and even bodily messiness (Livingston 2008) are often glossed, presented in excerpted snippets (Butt 2002), or missing altogether. And as in the literature on AIDS, families are largely absent.

For all of this overlap, there is little evident cross-pollination between the analytical spheres of humanitarianism and development. Their literatures run virtually in parallel. Given that AIDS straddles humanitarian and development concerns, and is commonly framed in both discourses, I suggest it provides an effective means of drawing these parallel analyses into conversation. I suggest further that families provide a uniquely privileged site for exploring potential connections – especially to the extent they bridge comparable projects of negotiating crisis and long-term change, providing care and enabling long-term growth, or managing resources,

exchange, giving, receiving, and moral obligation. Families are also routinely subject to sustained intervention by humanitarian and development initiatives alike, making them a critical social domain in which the two overlap in practice. And finally, thinking of families in terms of their relationships to and disconnections from humanitarian and development projects provides a rich perspective on the links between kinship and politics – extending analysis of those links on a transnational scale. By drawing NGO and government interventions into my discussion of the lived experience of kinship over the coming chapters, I seek to incorporate all three of these novel perspectives.

As noted at the outset of this section, the notion that Tswana politics might be linked to – and even have its roots in – Tswana kinship practice is not, in itself, entirely new. Nor is the notion that both spheres might be affected by larger global political processes any newer. Schapera (1970) provided a thoroughgoing analysis of the genealogies of the Kgatla chiefs' kinship affiliations, which he took to be the backbone of village community politics. He drew connections between social roles, kinship terms and status, and directly linked the supportive closeness of matrilineal relatives, and the competitive antagonism among patrilineal relatives, with strategies for accessing power within the chieftainship. And he questioned how the advent of indirect colonial rule might rework these dynamics. In this approach, he aligned himself with the bulk of anthropological literature on kinship in Africa at the time: reading kinship as a stand-in for politics in small-scale societies. That analytical predisposition aside, by focusing on powerful families, Schapera's work on the Kgatla chiefs went some distance in establishing the family as a political entity (Schapera 1970) – though it didn't go so far as to recognise kinship as fundamentally political. Here, I seek to invert his project, by exploring the extent to which organisations we understand to be political entities – government, NGO, or transnational agencies – work in familial ways. Comparing these two projects shows, I suggest, that while practice of politics and governance does not simply arise out of kin practice (Schapera 1940), neither does it simply act upon families (Kuper 1975). It does both, describing a constant dialectic between the state and home, a mutual making and remaking; an interdependence which has taken on transnational

implications, which are brought into relief in the era of AIDS and humanitarian intervention. In this thesis, I seek to trace these mutually-defining processes between the Tswana family, NGOs, and government social work offices. By so doing, following Susan McKinnon and Fennella Cannell (2013), I aim to bring the spheres of kinship and politics into conversation with one another, to explore the work done to separate them, and to trace the persistent interdependencies between them.

Fieldwork: Context and Methods

Dithaba

I conducted my fieldwork in a village I have called Dithaba⁵, one of many small but quickly growing settlements in Botswana's south east, huddled along the railway and highway that were the country's first arterial transport routes. It stands between the capital city, Gaborone, and two other mid-sized towns, within thirty minutes' to an hour's commuting distance of each. The border with South Africa is just a few kilometres distant, unmarked among the farmlands and cattleposts that extend around the village outskirts.

As in many other villages, a single tarred road leads in to the *kgotla*, or customary court, at the heart of the village near a shallow dam; and a far-reaching tangle of dusty red roads stretches from there, drawing in eight or nine neighbourhoods which are even more thoroughly entwined by an endless array of footpaths. A junior high school, senior secondary school, and primary school each stand just off the tarred road, as do the clinic and a large home-based care project; another primary school stands just beyond the dam, near the community hall, a small village library, and an assortment of other council-run community buildings in various states of use and disrepair. A large non-governmental (NGO) project for orphaned and vulnerable children, comprised of several buildings and play areas all surrounded by a fence,

⁵ In the interests of approximating anonymity, I have given the village a pseudonym and amalgamated features from other nearby communities into my descriptions of it (see 'A Note on Style' below). As such, I have not included maps of the village.

stands a little farther south. Beyond it are a handful of preschools, the post office, and the village's larger shops, as well as numerous smaller shops, hardware shops, butchers' shops, front-yard tuckshops, and a sizable number of informal shebeens and bars. And between these businesses stand residential plots, carefully fenced or hedged but contiguous, their yards fastidiously cleared of vegetation (barring the odd kitchen garden, hardy fruit or shade trees), and swept clean. In most yards concrete, tin-roofed homes – often two or three to a plot – are found, at various stages of construction, facing one another across an open *lelwapa*, or courtyard. In only a very few yards are the traditional thatch-roofed, clay-walled rondavels that once characterised Tswana villages to be seen. At the same time, large, undeveloped swathes of land are scattered at intervals around the village, giving a sense of spaciousness and ample room to grow.

The last census, in 2011, listed over 7,000 people resident in the village (RoB 2015) – though perhaps less than 5,000 are usually resident there, and far fewer would reference it as *ko gae* (home). The senior secondary – a largely self-contained boarding school for students from as far away as the western Kalahari, fenced round in its entirety, and in many ways kept quite separate from the day-to-day life of the village – accounted for nearly 2,000 people alone. The clinic, junior high, and two of the NGOs all drew in professional staff or volunteers from around the country and farther abroad, housing them on-site or in government housing nearby; and the residential project, too, drew most of its clients from elsewhere. As plots in new and quickly expanding neighbourhoods at the village's edge were sold for profit, professionals from around the country who worked in Gaborone also began building in the village and creating a 'bedroom community' there – though their critical social links remained with their home villages. But drawing an agglomeration of people from distant places was not necessarily a new trend for Dithaba either; I heard elders refer to well-established neighbourhoods in the heart of the village as 'the place of the Xhosa', for example, referencing an in-migration of residents from that South African tribe long enough back that the details had become hazy, and younger generations were completely unaware of it.

Work in Dithaba for people from Dithaba was scarce. A few worked in the local NGOs, or were attached to the *kgotla*'s tribal administration offices; others staffed local stores and bars. Many ran their own small businesses – often tuckshops and shebeens – with mixed luck; and many more survived on 'piecework', a mix of short-term manual labour ranging from skilled building to general yardwork. Many of those from the older generation were subsistence farmers, ploughing and raising cattle and goats in the farms and cattleposts around the village; and more than a few young people I knew had successfully acquired government grants to set up smallholdings of their own, raising goats or pigs on their families' lands. Those lucky enough to acquire professional training as nurses, teachers, social workers, and so on were often posted to distant villages, and frequently relocated. Others with training in business or finance were more likely to work in the nearby towns. Less well-educated wage labourers, too, were drawn to the capital or nearby towns, as security personnel, shop attendants, and so on. The bus on which I used to commute to work in Gaborone – during my time at Social Services – was filled with a mix of accountants and security guards, social workers and secretaries, teachers and mechanics, with the occasional appearance of grandmothers running errands and *dingaka* (traditional doctors) doing likewise. Like many towns and villages across the country, the population of Dithaba was not only highly mixed, but highly mobile.

Dithaba had had a reputation for being a village particularly hard-hit at the onset of the AIDS epidemic. "Just fifteen years ago, you wouldn't believe," one social worker I knew confided, "there were funerals every weekend, and *many*. People were *dying*." It was the main reason that both the orphan care project and the home-based care project in the village had been established, and were so well-funded. And so AIDS was also, in a roundabout way, the main reason I had come to the village when I first moved there to volunteer with the orphan care centre in early 2004. To an extent, the epidemic shaped the relationships I formed there and the trajectories they followed. The first people I knew, and those to whom I became closest, had either been orphaned by AIDS or worked with children who had; and theirs were the first families I knew as well. By the time I first arrived, anti-retroviral treatment was free and fairly widely available, and the worst of the dying had passed – though AIDS

was by no means a closed chapter. It was still common enough to see funerals every weekend, especially in winter; and many were linked to the disease, though official cause of death was often carefully obscured and seldom discussed. Friends and family have been infected, have fallen ill and recovered, have fallen ill and died; for the survivors and their families, the daily difficulties of providing for children, managing medication, accessing NGO and government services, negotiating intimate relationships, securing and retaining work, eating properly and staying well have all weighed heavier under the burden of the disease. AIDS was always there, in the village; but outside the NGO and government worlds in which I worked it remained in the background. I was struck constantly not only by the fact its presence went unspoken, but by the fact that it just didn't – or wasn't allowed to – *matter* in the ways I expected. As noted above, this thesis was motivated in part by a desire to understand the lived experience of the AIDS pandemic, and to make sense of the disease's social place in the village: its profound social impact, and simultaneous rendering into apparent irrelevance.

Over the six years in which I have called Dithaba home (including fieldwork), I stayed on-site in one of its non-governmental projects, lived in four different neighbourhoods, and helped build a house in a fifth. I worked in local NGOs, I commuted to government work in the city, I advised on small business proposals and ploughed and harvested in the fields. And I helped raise children, celebrated weddings, visited the ill, and buried the dead. This thesis draws upon experiences, people, and perspectives on the family from all of those contexts, and blends them together in the specific households, families, and agencies around which I have built this thesis (see 'A note on style' below). Without question, however, it was one family in particular whose care and guidance has informed my understandings more than any other; and I turn to their role in my research next.

On Being Family

It was a bright, hot afternoon by the time we arrived at the family *masimo*, or lands, hoping to surprise Mmapula with a visit. She was nowhere to be found in the small

yard; the one-room corrugated iron house was empty, as was the small lean-to kitchen, and the roughly trellised patch of shade that stood outside it. Nor was she out in the adjacent fields, green and tangled with sorghum and beans and watermelon, upon which the sun beat mercilessly.

Lorato wandered out beyond the fence, studying the ground. Before long, she'd found her grandmother's telltale footprints in the sand – the small, tennis-shoe tread of the right foot, and the long drag of the left, affected by a stroke years before. We followed the tracks down to the sandy road, and then along a narrow lane, until we arrived at the clean-swept yard of her neighbour. The two elderly women sat on low benches in the shade of the yard's single tree, chatting.

They looked up as we approached, and we greeted them deferentially. "These are my children," explained Mmapula, by way of introduction. "Ah, so these are your children," said her neighbour, looking me up and down, her eyes milky with cataracts. She paused a beat. "I gather this one takes after her father," she added, nodding at me, with a mischievous look. We all looked at one another for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

By the time I began my fieldwork in late 2011, I had already known the Legae family for over seven years. The spirit in which Mmapula introduced me to her neighbour at the lands was a far cry from our first meeting all of those years earlier; in the interim I had helped with her grandchildren's schooling, she had met my parents and brother, we had harvested crops and celebrated Christmases together, and lived together as well. But my absorption into the Legae family was slow, fraught, and never quite complete. And it was that often awkward trajectory in which I learned more about the principles, practices, contradictions and limits of Tswana kinship than anywhere else.

When I returned to conduct fieldwork in 2011, my initial plan was to locate myself in another large village in the region – a village where I knew several social workers and NGO co-ordinators, and where I had hopes of securing a volunteer post at a local

social work office. I planned to stay with the Legae family only briefly, and to visit on holidays and at month end, as most employed adult children do. But the process of acquiring a post proved rather more difficult and time-consuming than anticipated; and after several months, I found myself still in Dithaba. While this presented some challenges for my research into intervening agencies – which I revisit in the next section – it presented an opportunity to understand the daily lived experience of family in a way I never had before; and with a family in which I was already deeply implicated, and with whom I was already close. They became the primary focus of my research.

As the family became accustomed to my presence, I came to occupy several overlapping and apparently contradictory roles at home. Much of the time, I was taken as *mma go Lorato*, Lorato's mother. Lorato had taken me under her wing from the beginning, showing me the footpaths and back ways of the village and letting me in on its gossip and secrets. She had played a crucial role as my guide when I first lived in the village, a role she reprised during my fieldwork. Much as she had when we went looking for her grandmother at the lands, she was able to recognise the signs in the sand, to connect them to the people who made them, and to lead me along the necessary paths to find what I sought. And it was Lorato who had brought me into her family, as well. Mmapula usually introduced me as *mma go Lorato* at funerals and weddings, occasionally adding that my mother had come to Botswana to give me to her as a replacement for her own lost daughter. Lorato's mother, Keitumetse, had died perhaps three years before I met Lorato at the local orphan care centre. I was distinctly uncomfortable with the sense of substitution the title implied, until I came to understand that Botswana typically recognise multiple mothers, and that it was more a means of situating me in the family in a way that recognised the responsibilities I had taken on, the relationships I had built, and – perhaps more importantly – the relationships that had been built with me.

Mmapula's children, the adult siblings, took me as a sister accordingly, though where I was situated varied: sometimes they treated me as an elder sister, which role Keitumetse had occupied; more often, they repositioned me according to my own

age (in a role roughly similar to Kelebogile's – see family chart below). Likewise, nieces with whom Keitumetse had developed especially close relationships adopted a habit of ease with me; others of the children became close to me based on our interactions, or my relationships with their parents. At the same time, Mmapula took Lorato as her own child, and would put us both on equal footing with her other children – much as she did when making the introduction to her neighbour above. My role, in other words, was sometimes interchangeable with Keitumetse's, and sometimes distinctly my own. Lorato's role and mine, too, were sometimes interchangeable – as indeed her role had become interchangeable with her mother's upon the latter's passing – and sometimes markedly distinct.

The youngest children of the yard found this shifting array of relationships almost as bewildering as I did, and questioned them constantly – getting slightly different answers every time. When she was about seven, Kenosi asked her grandmother who the elderly woman's children were, and Mmapula named each, including both Lorato and myself. Not long thereafter, Kenosi asked Lorato who her mother was, and Lorato indicated me. "Koreen, who doesn't beat?!" Kenosi exclaimed. "*Nnyaa*, she can't be a parent, not beating," she added, to general laughter. Kenosi never came to a satisfactory conclusion about my appropriate role, but as soon as she learned to write, she practised inscribing 'Koreen Legae' on every scrap of paper she could find. The generic inclusion in the family that her naming bestowed was perhaps most apt: it left room for a multiple and fluid role, part surrogate and part custom-made, changing with the responsibilities I undertook and the work the other members of the family and I did to relate to one another. And in this sense – as we will see in the chapters that follow – my role was not so different from the others' roles at home, which were equally multiple and shifting; though by the same token, it was never quite the same.

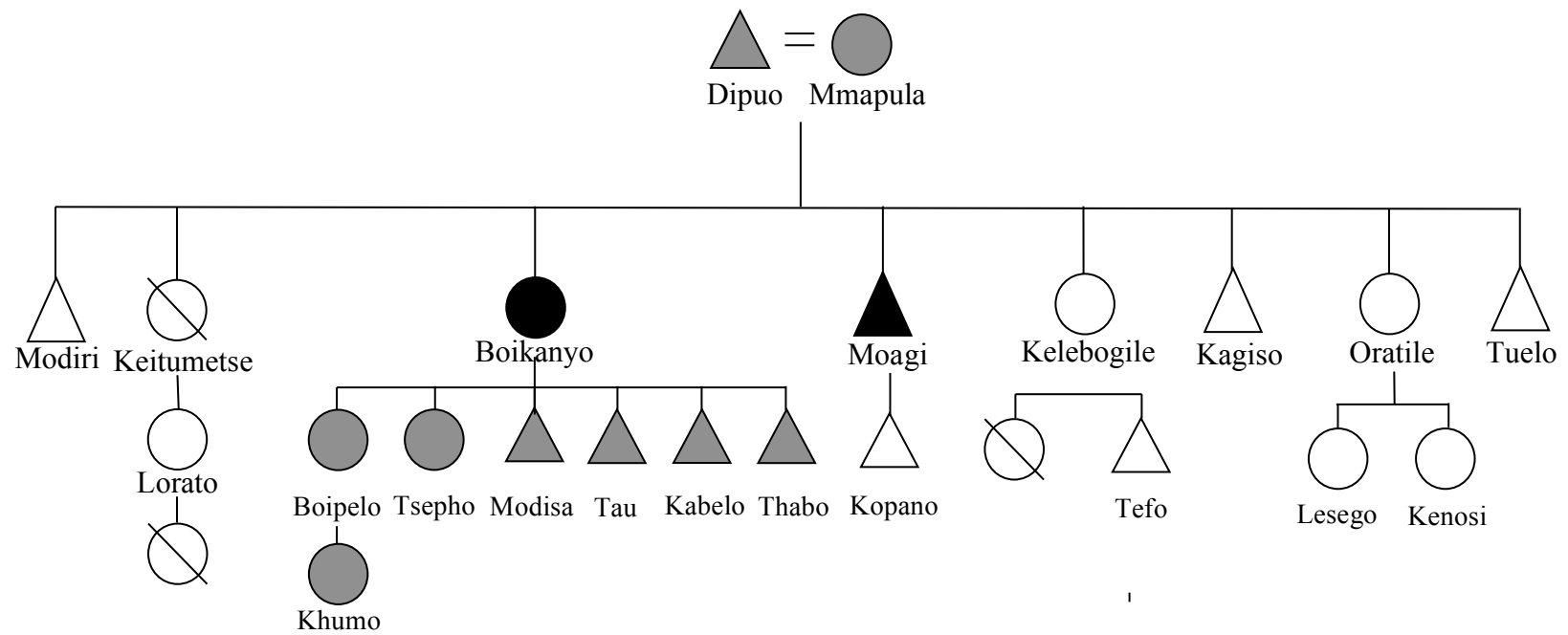
Being embedded in one family, of course, raises questions of generalisability and scale. The chapters that follow do not set about to provide an exhaustive account of Tswana kinship: I do not, as Schapera (1940) did, try to account for every stage in the domestic cycle; nor do I attempt to speak to every sphere of kinship theory, as

productive as perspectives on bodies and substance, or memory, or affect (for example) might have been in answering the questions I have posed. Instead, I trace the lived experience of the Legae family, as I have experienced it with them, over the time I have known them; and I aim to be as true to what mattered in that experience as I am able. The question remains whether the *dikgang*, or conflicts, I've described here are defining features of kinship generally, of Tswana kinship specifically, or simply marks of a single family's dysfunction. It is clear to me that I would have had no access to the experiences, narratives and dynamics of conflict upon which this thesis is based without being thoroughly embedded – over a significant period – in one family. *Dikgang* are frequently subtle, seldom volunteered or discussed, unfold over long periods of time, and often carefully hidden and contained. Unless one is more or less directly affected, has been witness (or party) to the issues unfolding, or has something to offer in the process of resolution – that is to say, unless one is a particular sort of kin – it is quite possible to overlook a family's running *dikgang* altogether. Embeddedness in one family was, in other words, the only way I could come to understand the role of *dikgang* in kinship.

But more than this, I would argue that a family is never a 'singular' entity in any meaningful sense. Multiple groups of people, each of which is 'family', defined by varying and changing degrees of relatedness, are subsumed within the wide-ranging sphere of kin. And they are connected to an endless variety of other families as well, as neighbours, or through co-workers, churchmates and friends. To be a member of 'a family' is to be a member of many sorts of family at once, and also to be connected to many other families besides. While being a member of the Legae household, I was, of course, doing research among many other families as well – those of neighbours, friends, and old colleagues, and even those of the other families they spoke about – many of which feature in this thesis. In all, comparable dynamics of *dikgang* figured strongly.

In fact, I would suggest that the range of connections one can build with people and their families in Botswana *relies on* being a recognised member of a given family.

The Legae Family



The ways that people from outside my Dithaba family related to me were in many ways made possible and mediated by my inclusion in the Legae household, with which they could often establish some pre-existing connection. (In the same way, my Dithaba family related to me with much greater ease and confidence once they had spent some time with my parents and brother.) Even where pre-existing connections were hard to come by, being part of a Tswana family made me a different sort of person in the eyes of friends, colleagues, and even strangers; it provided a grounding and framework for our relationships, and more nuanced possibilities for shared experience and understanding. The dense interlinkages produced through families – and the constant work that goes into separating, re-aligning, prioritising and re-fashioning them – are one clue to the conceptual and experiential interdependencies of kinship, politics, economy and religion (McKinnon and Cannell 2013), a theme to which I will return throughout this thesis. Methodologically, they also suggest that embeddedness in a family *enables* access to the widest possible range of social connections, rather than constraining it; and that it may therefore be among the best positions from which to produce wide-ranging and generalisable research.

At the same time, being embedded in a family as a researcher presents an ethical dilemma – particularly when speaking of the conflicts and crises which define family in part because they are usually kept exclusive to it. Michael Lambek (2011) echoes this dilemma when he describes “stealing kinship” (2011: 6), noting that the intimacies of both kinship and ethnography provoke betrayals, and that the “betrayal is double when the ethnography presented is about the intimacy of kinship itself” (ibid.). I suggest that conflict and crisis are not only examples of the sort of intimacy Lambek has in mind, but potentially dangerous forms of it – making their betrayal doubly dangerous, as well. By the same token – as I hope to show – both the intimacy and dangerous betrayal that conflict evokes are singularly meaningful ways of *continuing* to be kin. I will return to some of the stylistic choices I have made in order to make my ethnographic betrayal less egregious in ‘A note on style’ below; but here, I acknowledge that being an ethnographer and being family both presuppose and subsist on that betrayal, in uncanny and uncomfortable ways.

On Intervening, and Recollecting

The effects of NGO and governmental intervention in the Tswana family formed the other major critical concern of my research – not least because both NGOs and government were intimately entangled with my experience of families in Botswana from the outset. As noted above, it was an NGO that brought me into contact with the Legae household in the first place; and throughout my initial years in Botswana, it was NGO, government, and donor discourses about the family, policies defining the family, and programmes targeting the family in which I worked and with which I wrestled continuously. The marked dissonance between these spheres, and their simultaneous deep interdependencies, suggested the rich potential of reading them together (and made clear the difficulty of disentangling them).

As such, I initially proposed to attach myself to a district-level Social and Community Development (S&CD, or social work) office, and to assist its staff in co-ordinating NGOs working with orphaned and vulnerable children in their respective catchment areas. From 2005 to 2008, I oversaw a similar initiative at the District of Social Services (DSS), the national government agency tasked with developing policy and overseeing programming for orphaned and vulnerable children, people living with HIV, the poor, those living in rural areas, and many others besides. I established a unit that oversaw the co-ordination, training, and funding of NGOs working with orphaned and vulnerable children, and that facilitated links with local area social workers. I still enjoyed strong connections with Social Services, where my previous work was well-known and had been well-received, by the time I returned to Botswana for fieldwork in late 2011; and meetings with former colleagues, the head of the orphan care programme, and ultimately the Director all generated formal support. An appropriate district was identified, where initial meetings with another former colleague and her immediate supervisors were also positive. Unfortunately, securing official approval for my post at District Council level – where the lines of management are notoriously convoluted and often difficult to navigate (something of a colonial hangover, as noted briefly above) – proved time-consuming and ultimately inconclusive. My former colleague, who was my key

connection to and advocate in the District hierarchies, moved to another District; and as such, my official attachment to her office went unrealised.

In spite of these setbacks, I still was able to spend some of my fieldwork time in social work offices and NGOs. During the time we were attempting to create an official post, I was invited to visit the District S&CD office and assist with NGO-related tasks as frequently as I liked. I was housed in an office with my former colleague, which she shared with numerous other social workers; and I attended one or two days a week for a number of months. At the same time, I made myself available to former colleagues in the NGO sphere, and offered *ad hoc* assistance in such endeavours as drafting strategic plans, reviewing proposals, and offering other technical assistance. I visited Social Services frequently, dropped in on colleagues in their local social work offices and NGOs, and attended major events that brought both organisations together as I was able.

While I had hoped to establish a role for myself in a new community as part of my research, coming to know new families through work in a new (if familiar) post, my previous time in Botswana supplied the bulk of my opportunities to investigate the impact of interventions on families. As a result, recollections of and sustained reflection on past programme initiatives, events, and shared experiences formed a critical dimension of my research with social workers and NGO staff and volunteers alike. Our recollections ranged over a period stretching back five to six years before my field research, and had the added advantage of allowing us to assess the legacies of events and initiatives together. As the opening vignette of this chapter demonstrates, reflections have proven to be an equally important dimension of my research among family, as well – not only were they a major means of filling in the gaps in family stories, trials and tribulations for the years I was away, they were also a means of constantly re-assessing the repercussions of events for which I had been present. Perhaps most appropriately, the process of recollecting made the influence of my past experience in Botswana on my present research explicit instead of implicit – a necessary reflexive contextualisation I have tried to bring out clearly in the chapters that follow.

These recollections not only recorded the past, but brought it into the present sphere of research; they connected the fieldwork moment with its precedents, and to some extent foreshadowed its consequences, placing it in its appropriate temporal context. And of course, they frequently – if not exclusively – dwelt upon problems jointly encountered, difficult past events, and major contemporary social issues: they were primarily about *dikgang*. As such, recollections provide unusually apt insights into the ways *dikgang* have emerged in and shaped relationships at work and at home, and the legacies they have left. Appropriately, they also demand critical reflexivity around my own fraught involvements in NGOs, government offices, and families, and my movements between these spheres. Of course, recollections do not and cannot account for all of the key details of any given moment or topic; nor are they failsafe. Where recollections have formed an important dimension of my ethnographic data on a given subject, I have done my utmost not to make claims beyond what that material can support, or what comparable experiences contemporary to my research might corroborate.

The importance of *dikgang* in recollecting my past experiences of Botswana, in reflecting on NGO and governmental interventions, and in being family, raises questions about the methodological implications of investigating conflict. I turn to this consideration last.

Investigating Conflict

I did not set out to study conflict, much less to use conflict as a method of understanding families; instead, it found me. To think of participating in conflict as a ‘method’, then, requires a certain awkward revisionism, and suggests an inaccurate – and somewhat untoward – intent besides. However, an analytical focus on conflict taps into specific methodological precedents, and presents specific consequences, which I explore briefly here.

There is a long-standing tradition of examining conflict and dispute as a means of understanding Tswana sociality more broadly. Since Schapera's time, anthropological attention has been focused upon the proceedings of the *kgotla*, or customary court, and there are extensive ethnographic accounts of cases brought, arguments offered, and decisions given on everything from land use to marriage and pregnancy disputes (e.g. Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Griffiths 1997; Schapera 1938). Indeed, one of Schapera's major early works was the *Handbook on Tswana Law and Custom* (1938), and it drew heavily on cases at the *kgotla*. In much of the legal anthropology generated out of this tradition, broad conclusions about Tswana communities, issues of major social concern (such as teenage pregnancy, for example; Schapera 1933) and means of addressing them have been compellingly articulated.

Of course, as the examples given above suggest, many of these disputes were profoundly bound up with questions of kinship. Anne Griffiths' (1997) work is largely given over to consideration of marriage and pregnancy through the medium of *kgotla* disputes, and issues of inheritance also abound. However, little is said about the lived experience of these disputes at home; and virtually nothing is said about the ways families deal with them, either before they arrive at the *kgotla* or after they have left. Little consideration is given to how such disputes might figure in *making* family, in spite of their notable prevalence in connection with other family-making activity. Griffiths herself notes the importance of contextualising disputes in other social processes, and warns against taking them as either timeless types or one-off events (1997: 31-2). In an attempt to heed her advice, while augmenting this tradition of research around disputes, I explore conflict from the perspective of the *lelwapa*, or household, rather than the *kgotla*. Not only does my approach enable a fresh consideration of the ways conflict may *create* and sustain kinship, rather than simply derailing it until external powers can be brought to bear in its correction; but it suggests a novel perspective on the relationship that institutions like the *kgotla* have with both families and kinship practice. Attention to conflict at home also provides perspective on the continuities and adaptabilities of social practice that disputes may signify and enable, offering a counterbalance to the persistent tropes of

cultural change and upheaval that characterise other assessments of conflict (Schapera 1940: preface, Chapter 12; compare Gluckman 1940, 1956; Turner 1957).

Tracking conflict in the home is, however, a rather more difficult task than attending public *kgotla* meetings or reviewing case files from public courts. And given the care with which conflict is hidden and contained within families, it is not something that can easily be assessed by asking questions or paying visits. To trace the ways in which being and making family produces *dikgang*, I had to attempt to be and make family in the same ways as everyone else in the Legae household – by living together, contributing, building, planning, attending negotiations and so forth – over a sustained period of time. The same might be said of any sort of kinship research, of course; but where less fraught practices may be more readily shared and discussed with non-kin, conflict is often slow to be revealed, and even slower to be shared. Indeed, it will *not* be shared unless one is already somehow necessarily embroiled in it – as one often only can be by being embroiled in the daily responsibilities and intimacies of being kin. While I seldom picked a fight – except, perhaps, for provoking the occasional debate with the younger members of the household around the fire – I came into the family in the very beginning as an object of *kgang* (as we saw above); and thereafter, I frequently found myself embroiled in *dikgang*, whether I was being called as a witness or mediator, upbraided for the behaviour of children for whom I had taken responsibility, or whether I had accidentally mis-spoken or mis-behaved (as happened frequently enough, especially in the beginning). To come to understand the sorts of problems families face, and the ways they cope with them, in other words, I had to be part of the problem – a positionality that flew in the face of the problem-solving roles I had taken while working in NGOs and Social Services. Though taking conflict as method seems to stand in stark contrast with Fred Klaits’ (2010: 7) use of love as method – an approach which produced deeply humane insight into the Tswana response to AIDS – I came to realise that my conflictual entanglements were also very much expressions and enactments of love, and therefore an unexpected variation on his approach.

Intentionally undertaking research through conflict – especially by *provoking* conflict – runs the risk of presupposing its own conclusions, and is ethically suspect besides. However, participating in and paying attention to the constructive dynamics of conflict – rather than shying away from them on the supposition that they represent a failure, breakdown, or embarrassing anomaly in otherwise naturally harmonious interpersonal relations – bears significant potential for insight, as I hope the following chapters will show.

Chapter Summaries

This thesis straddles two worlds: the world of the home, and the world of NGO and state interventions that take the home and the family as their object. Disparate as these worlds seem – and in some ways are – I suggest that they are also intricately intertwined; and that any attempt to understand the lived experience of kinship in Botswana’s time of AIDS must make room for both, and address their complex, uncomfortable, and yet undeniable interdependencies. In the chapters that follow, I draw these worlds together, and trace the interconnections, boundaries, contradictions, and persistent influences running between them; and I describe the work that Botswana do to bring them together and keep them apart.

In order to describe these complex entanglements, each chapter weaves together three main ethnographic perspectives. The first perspective on each chapter’s central theme is drawn from the home, among *balwapeng* – family who stay together in the same *lelwapa*, or courtyard. The second looks at the same theme from beyond the *lelwapa*, or between households – frequently with an emphasis on the production of personhood. And the third perspective reframes the theme in the context of AIDS, and NGO and government intervention programming in response to the epidemic. Chapters Five and Six mark a slight exception to this pattern, by stretching it over two chapters: Chapter Five investigates the question of how relationships between the familial and the political are negotiated first in the *lelwapa*, and then in the village; and Chapter Six pursues the same question, in greater depth, around NGO

and government intervention programming exclusively. A similar trajectory is roughly echoed across the chapters. In both cases, I have adopted a structure that prioritises the *lelwapa* and establishes it as encompassing – in line with the encompassment it enjoys in relation to the *motse* (village) and *morafe* (tribe; see Chapter Five). And I have sought to demonstrate ways that interventions work both from within and without that paradigm, variously tapping into and disrupting it.

Chapter One begins with a description of the Tswana *gae*, or home. I suggest that the *gae* is a multiple, scattered place, centered on the *lelwapa* (courtyard) but stretching to include the often far-flung *masimo* (farmland) and *moraka* (cattlepost) as well. I trace the Legae family's practices of movement, staying, and care-work that integrated their *gae*, and the tensions between sustaining closeness and managing distance that emerge for families out of those practices. The building of new houses – a critical means of *go itirela*, or self-making – presents similar problems of establishing distance from family while simultaneously requiring stronger connections with them. In both cases, *dikgang* are continuously produced by these tensions; and in both, the continuous negotiation of those *dikgang* is critical to striking balance and adapting to change. The spatial practices of NGO and social work programmes in the village show surprising similarities and links to the spatial practices of family; but by contrast, they invert those spatialities and knock them out of sync, producing disruptive alternatives to the family home and *dikgang* that cannot be absorbed effectively by families.

Chapter Two moves to a consideration of care – a subject that was, unexpectedly, at the heart of the most violent exchanges, vociferous arguments, and protracted grudges that we navigated during my time with the Legae family. I suggest that for the Tswana, care is constituted in specific things (cattle and food, for example); the work of producing, acquiring, and looking after them; and the transformative act of contributing them. Contributions of care are guided by, establish and adapt kin roles, by gender and age; and they underpin a markedly fluid and multiplicitous framing of generations and intergenerational relationships within families. However, contributions are subject to competing claims. The very same things and work that

one's family expects are expected by one's partners, friends, and neighbours as well, and figure crucially in the project of self-making. The tensions that arise between these obligations of care, and the perpetual uncertainty about whether people will contribute what they ought, whom they will contribute to and for how long, make contributions a volatile source of *dikgang*. Tswana care, in this understanding, is continuously subject to crisis. Casting AIDS as a 'crisis of care', then, suggests a misunderstanding of usual Tswana experiences of care, and a blindness to ways in which the Tswana family may be equipped to cope with such crisis – or may even thrive on it. I conclude Chapter Two with a consideration of the ways that NGO and government interventions frame and provide care, the new crises that they inadvertently produce in families by so doing, and the legacies of these crises for kinship practice.

Chapter Three pursues dynamics of *dikgang* that emerge around reproducing kinship in a time of AIDS – specifically around pregnancy and marriage. I argue that for the Tswana, intimate relationships are made into kin relationships through a gradual and carefully managed process of *recognition*, whereby they become visible, speakable, and known. Every stage of or emergence into recognition is marked and achieved by *dikgang*, or some form of conflict or crisis – the negotiation of which involves wider and wider circles of kin. Their relative success in addressing these *dikgang* determines not simply whether and how families might relate to one another, but the viability of the relationship their recognition shapes. And these processes of addressing *dikgang* are highly fraught, risky and prone to failure, beset by the legacies of previously unresolved *dikgang* that echo across spheres of kin and down through the generations. At the same time, accumulating and successfully managing *dikgang* emerges as a key factor in self-making or personhood – primarily through pregnancy for women, and through marriage for men – raising the stakes of negotiation even further. Much as thinking of AIDS as a 'crisis of care' overlooks the ordinary crises care provokes, thinking of infection strictly in terms of risk overlooks the extent to which intimate relationships are ordinarily beset by risk; and it ignores the critical ways in which the management of such risks makes those relationships meaningful, makes personhood, and makes kin. If AIDS raises the

stakes of such risks, I argue, it may do so more in terms of its potential effects on negotiating recognition, rather than in terms of life and death – a possibility that goes some distance in explaining Botswana’s persistently high rates of new infection.

Children and their circulation form the focus of Chapter Four. As in many other places, in Botswana children are frequently sent – or send themselves – to be looked after, for greater and lesser periods of time, by extended family and even non-relatives. While anthropologists have often read comparable practices elsewhere as a means of binding families together and producing or strengthening closeness among kin, for the Tswana I suggest it serves rather to differentiate and distance kin, and to assert limits and boundaries on kinship. The circulation of children experimentally extends the practices of movement, staying, and care-work explored in Chapter One; the economies of care and contribution explored in Chapter Two; and the kin-forming recognition of relationships discussed in Chapter Three. As such, it attracts the *dikgang* connected to all three – the management of which tends, as I will show, to reproduce relationships of closeness or distance among kin, rather than reworking them. These informal practices of child-circulation stand in stark contrast to government initiatives around formal fostering, which promote relationships of mutual care, responsibility, and love among non-kin – and thereby seek to produce alternative families for children, and permanent fixes to the *dikgang* that affect them. In other words, formal fostering collapses the appropriate distances and boundaries among and between families that child circulation would otherwise reinforce; removes kin from their roles in negotiating *dikgang* involving children; and draws non-kin into *dikgang* from which they would ordinarily be excluded. The upshot – as in previous chapters – is that interventions seeking to strengthen families and reproduce kin practice instead disrupt and replace it.

Chapter Five extends these reflections on the limits of kinship to a consideration of the boundaries and links forged between the Tswana home and village, and between the spheres of kinship and politics. It takes in two major events: a major family party, held to appreciate the success of the Legae elders as parents; and the homecoming of the first *mophato*, or age regiment, to be initiated in over a generation. Each provides

a complementary perspective on the ways in which the spheres of the family and the village are distinguished, the sorts of relationships that are established between them, and the role of self-making in forming those distinctions and relationships. In both, dynamics of hiding and sharing figure prominently, echoing the dynamics of recognition described in Chapter Three: non-kin are drawn into familial performances of success, and families are drawn into the *morafe*'s (tribe's) performances of success, but in both cases significant work goes into obscuring *dikgang*, and containing them in the family sphere. I argue that attention to *dikgang* demonstrates ways in which the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, might be understood to be encompassing of both the *motse* (village) and *morafe* (tribe), rather than simply encompassed by them – articulating relationship in which the latter are understood to begin in and to be sustained by the home.

Finally, Chapter Six applies the observations of Chapter Five to the world of NGO and governmental intervention, and questions the ways that kinship and politics interact in national and transnational contexts. The chapter begins with an opening ceremony, held jointly between a prominent national NGO, government representatives from Social Services and Foreign Affairs, and a Canadian donor and volunteering group. It then explores the daily work of a government Social and Community Development (S&CD, or social work) office, and of a community-based NGO, before returning to the ceremony to conclude. I argue that two parallel projects are evident in these spheres: one, of domesticating the workplace; and the other, of bureaucratising or professionalising the family and household. Familiar kin-like practices appear to be at work in the internal dynamics of both the S&CD office and the NGO; and their relationships with one another, and with international donors, are frequently framed in kinship terms. In practice and discourse alike, social workers and NGO staff attempt to naturalise the work their agencies undertake in and through families, obscuring the political dimensions of those projects. At the same time, this naturalising work occurs within a bureaucratic discourse and practice that explicitly distances itself from (and claims superiority to) kinship, even while attempting to replicate it. This secondary project – of bureaucratising or professionalising the family and household, the collapse and corruption of which is taken for granted –

seems to run counter to the first. But this bureaucratisation, too, bears the mark of kinship values and practice – specifically, middle-class English and American folk models of kinship (Schneider 1980; Strathern 1992). S&CD offices and NGOs, then, are driven by an unexpectedly messy, global diversity of kinships, which underpin both their institutional frameworks and their social programming. They are, in other words, encompassed by kinship, while attempting to encompass it. Families deftly exploit the conundrums generated by this confusion of kinships to draw agencies into the realm of kin practice, while carefully excluding them as actual kin actors. As a result, both NGOs and social work offices are left in ambivalent positions, simultaneously absent from and powerfully present in the family, marginal and yet crucial to it, defined by and attempting to re-define it. This ambivalence, and ongoing work to contain it, marks an emergent uncertainty in the relationship between the spheres of family and politics we saw in Chapter Five; and, I argue, this shift is perhaps the most profound legacy of the AIDS epidemic for Tswana families.

Taken together, the following chapters seek to illustrate the argument that every process or practice of Tswana kinship produces *dikgang*, or conflict and crisis; that addressing these *dikgang* is a fraught, indeterminate process that produces more *dikgang* in its turn; and that the cycle that emerges is surprisingly adaptive, asserting continuity in kinship while making room for change. More than unfortunate, anomalous forces that affect families but are essentially insignificant to them, conflict and crisis emerge as dynamics that are structural features of kinship, and distinctly *constitutive* of family.

A note on style

What is truer than truth? The story.

Jewish proverb

Each of the following chapters – and indeed each section – has been organised explicitly around a series of interwoven stories. They owe a stylistic debt, in some

ways, to Gluckman's case studies (e.g. Gluckman 1940) and Turner's 'social drama' (1957: 91-93): they seek to provide an indicative illustration of a given principle or dynamic; and they build out from these illustrations by stitching together several related events, over a period of time, featuring many of the same actors. At the same time, I have sought to avoid the major criticisms made of Gluckman's approach in particular, by allowing key arguments to emerge from the events and processes described, rather than developing principles separately and then seeking apt examples of them (Werbner 1990). Similarly, while many of the *dikgang* I explore conform to Turner's phases of social drama (1957: 91-92), I have avoided trying to tell them according to that schema, in order to avoid presupposing my conclusions. Indeed, it is with these criticisms in mind that I have tried to cast my ethnographic material in terms of stories, rather than narratively disconnected vignettes or an analytically-oriented collage of ethnographic detail. For the same reasons, I have tried to let those stories lead my analysis – a practice I brought to the writing-up process, and one mirrored in the structure of this thesis – rather than the other way around. Stories, I suggest, more thoroughly contextualise the events around which they are built; and they accommodate subtlety and contradiction, in the ways they are both lived and told – thereby illustrating tensions critical to understanding social scenarios in general, and the tensions of kinship I have set out to describe in particular. Stories are situated in specific places, and unfold over time, grounding the material they convey and emphasising its temporality, history and trajectory. They encourage their readers to suspend disbelief and enter into the narrative – providing a unique space in which reader, author, and (here) informants can come into conversation and make sense of the scene together, often in surprising and unexpected ways. By requiring the reader's active participation, stories leave maximal room for readers to engage, and perhaps more importantly to object (Mosse 2006) – providing an interpretive flexibility that is especially important in post-colonial contexts (Clifford and Marcus 1986), particularly when they are subject to continuous and often problematic re-imaginings of social practice by a proliferation of intervening transnational agencies. "[S]tories are," in Kirin Naryan's gloss of Renato Rosaldo's *Culture and Truth* (1989), "incipiently analytic, and...in the sequence of reasoning, analysis has a narrative form" (Naryan 2012:8). In other

words, stories provide both the most natural means of transforming lived experience into analysis, and the form that analysis takes, while being uniquely effective in drawing the reader into the process; and it is for this reason that I have prioritised them.

Stories, of course, are crafted (Geertz 1973) and can be directed to specific ends. Indeed, the stories that follow have been deliberately told in ways that both illustrate and obscure: to demonstrate convincingly the dynamics with which this thesis concerns itself, but also to create a degree of anonymity for the people who populate it (beyond changing their names, which I have also done). Details have been differentially emphasised; different aspects of different accounts have been drawn together in the telling, or drawn apart. In some cases, my informants themselves – as well as their stories – have been split or amalgamated, or have had certain identifying characteristics swapped, displaced, or masked. On occasion, I have slightly re-ordered their relationships as well – though I have taken care to preserve those details of gender and generation, of secrecy or recognition, and of other relations mediated by those I describe (as with ones siblings' children, for example) that have critical implications for their experience. I have, in other words, fragmented and concealed aspects of the life stories of characters in this thesis in a way that mirrors the fragmentations and concealments of Tswana personhood (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). And I have applied similar conflations, divisions, and reorderings to the agencies I describe and the people who staff them, drawing together my experience of dozens of NGOs and social work offices from around the country into a single project and a single S&CD office in Dithaba. Similar projects and offices exist in the village; but they do not answer strictly to the descriptions I have provided here, and nor are they meant to do so. These choices have been made with an eye to covering the footprints of my friends, family, and colleagues in the sand, and defusing the potential dangers inherent in laying bare their personal trajectories and conflicts with kin; but at the same time, with an eye to rendering their experience as accessible as possible, by drawing them into a narrative frame.

The focus on telling an apt story involves some sacrifice in ethnographic breadth for the sake of greater depth – much as my embeddedness in one family did. The chapters that follow do not purport to provide a statistically broad sample of cases, nor an exhaustive account of all the permutations in which kinship is experienced across Botswana. Indeed, I take it to be impossible – and perhaps beside the point – to provide a complete ethnographic picture of any of the themes I tackle here. The creative confluences and amalgamations described above, however, do involve the drawing-together of a wide range of experiences and tales, such that one story not only connotes but actually *is* many stories. Stories, in this sense, are something like families: they not only incorporate a multitude of different sorts of stories within them, they connect to an endless series of other stories besides. In my choice of stories, and in the range of stories subsumed within them and linked to them, I hope to have provided a compelling likeness of contemporary Tswana kinship experience with a resonating familiarity for those who know it, and an accessible and engaging insight for those who don't.

Finally, in building this thesis around stories, I seek to do justice to a certain Tswana notion of truth, as much as to those models of truth that underpin social sciences research. Klaitz (2010), drawing on Hoyt Alverson (1978), points out that for Botswana truth is performative: “‘speaking truth’,” he notes, “involves speaking in such a way as to do true things for other people” (2010: 25). I suggest that the refiguration of events and people upon which the following stories rely is a way of speaking that presents the complexity in lived experience of intimacy and danger, conflict and kinship – while, to some extent, shielding the people with whom I have shared these experiences from further dangers in the process. I believe storytelling also allows for radically different understandings of kinship in a time of AIDS than those formulated in dominant social work, humanitarian, and academic discourse (a point ably demonstrated in novels and short stories alike; see Dow 2002, 2004; Dow and Essex, 2010; Gordimer 2004). The stories I have attempted to weave through this thesis may not be identical to the events that generated them; they are, by necessity, partial truths (Clifford 1986). But, in keeping with the proverb above, I take it that stories nonetheless convey a more insightful, resonating, and nuanced

perspective – that is to say, a truer truth – than a bare-bones account of events might. I hope that, as a result, this thesis will speak in a way that is true to my friends' and family's experience, and does something true for them – and for others who read it, be they anthropologists or practitioners, Batswana or non-Batswana, as well.

Chapter One

“Where Are You From? Where Are You Going?”: The Geographies of Tswana Kinship

Matlo go sha mabapi.

Neighbouring houses burn together.

“Welcome home!” Lorato and Oratile burst out simultaneously, in English, chuckling to themselves. We had just pulled into their yard after the hour’s drive from the airport in the capital. It had been a quiet trip; the family almost never spoke when they were in a car together, and I had a great deal to take in, travelling down the familiar highway and winding back into the village after two years away. And then came the women’s spontaneous exclamation, their surprise welcome. Children came tumbling out of doors, the youngest running full tilt for the car, the teenagers sauntering with studied nonchalance.

The yard had changed little since my last visit. An expansive plot mostly of hardened clay, it was focused upon a huddle of structures at its centre, which in turn gravitated around a square, paved courtyard behind a low wall – the *lelwapa*. Oratile’s older sister, Kelebogile, was seated there on a plastic chair, grinning as we arrived. Two of the structures were houses: a rectangular two-and-a-half-roomed house stood perpendicular to its predecessor, the main six-room building. In front of the larger house, and across from the smaller one, stood the *isong* or outdoor kitchen, framed in a low brick wall and covered by a roof of corrugated iron. Oratile’s and



Arriving home. (Photo: author)

Kelebogile's eldest brother, Modiri, sat on a low wooden chair near the fire there, tending a teapot in the coals and waiting to be greeted. Entering through a wide-open gate in the fence at the back of the yard, we had swung round to the front, and pulled into an area that faced the *lelwapa* and all three structures. The space had been roughly paved in rescued chunks of concrete for the cars of the yard – which had multiplied noticeably since my last visit.

The yard sat near a dried-up riverbed, not far from the centre of the village. The neighbourhood, or ward, was known (and named) for the tendency of springs to burst up suddenly from the earth, and small sinkholes were forever appearing at the edges of the yard. The dam was a short walk away, as was the village *kgotla*, or customary court; and the two primary schools and junior high were all equidistant, each ten minutes' walk away in different directions. The train tracks threaded through the village just nearby, paralleled by the highway a little farther on, and away behind them stood the modest, craggy hills from which the village took its name.

By the time I arrived for my fieldwork, I had been a visitor to this yard on and off for seven years – dating back to the times I walked Lorato and her neighbours 'halfway' from the nearby NGO where I met them. I had become close to the family and stayed with them for brief stretches in the past, and my plan was to stay briefly again, mostly out of courtesy, while I got myself on my feet. Little did I know I'd be spending most of the year in this yard, and that – in all its unanticipated fraughtness – it would become home.

In this chapter, I begin my analytical exploration of Tswana kinship much as my fieldwork experience of it began: by entering into its *space*. The spatialities of Tswana houses, yards, wards and villages have been described extensively in anthropological work that stretches back to the pre-colonial era (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 126-38; Klaitz 2010; Kuper 1980; Livingston 2005: 66-73; Morton 2007; Schapera 1940; Suggs 2009;), providing substantial insight into the ways these spatialities have (and haven't) changed over time. Most contributions have emphasised the concentric organisation of the household, and its echoes in the

concentric organisation of the village, in each case with men's spaces at the centre and women's at the periphery (Kuper 1980; see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 130-2, 137; Livingston 2005: 66). Symbolic resonances with cattle, food, and relationships with the dead have also been drawn on this basis (Kuper 1980: 19-20). Houses and residence have been framed as necessarily fissile, instantiating the problematic opposition between agnatic and sibling bonds produced by the fluidities of Tswana kinship structure. They have also been credited as the primary means by which agnatic bonds are rendered encompassing, providing the framework for the organisation of chiefdoms as well (see Introduction; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 135-7; Schapera 1940: Chapters One, Four). The pressures and necessity of movement – particularly in the context of labour migration to South Africa – and their deleterious effects on family cohesion have also featured strongly (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 130-2; Comaroff and Roberts 1977: 98,101; Klaitz 2010: 41-5; Schapera 1940).

These accounts, however, somewhat de-emphasise the extent to which “space has meaning in practice” (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 41); and while many historicise Tswana kinship spatialities, they also de-emphasise the more fine-grained temporalities of spatial practice. In prioritising structural logic and symbolic resolution, they overlook a series of countervailing tendencies that become evident with attention to everyday practice and experience. More recent work by Frederick Klaitz (2010) has remedied this tendency, effectively spelling out the processual dynamics of what he calls ‘housing activities’ – specifically, the building up over time of sentiments of love, care, jealousy and scorn through practices of staying, movement, and placement (Klaitz 2010: 31-3, Chapter Two). However, while the exhaustive list of ‘housing activities’ Klaitz supplies – including “nursing, visiting, staying, calling, hearing, obeying, drinking, bathing, praying, asking, singing, healing, procreating, confining, hiding, marrying, moving, consoling, mourning, and burying” (2010: 31-2) – are all undoubtedly emplaced, and make a convincing case for the emplacement of sentiment, his approach tends to obscure the ways in which the unique spatialities of the Tswana family shape and generate these practices (and sentiments, and relationships, in turn). In other words, he understands space from the

perspective of sentimental practice, rather than understanding sentimental practice through the management and experience of space over time. His project is also one of understanding love and care more generally, rather than kinship *per se*; and the breadth of his examples makes it difficult to distinguish between practices and processes that are specifically kin-oriented and kin-making, and those that are not (a distinction the Tswana routinely make). I return to a more thorough consideration of some of these ‘housing activities’ in my discussion of care in Chapter Two. In this chapter, I set out to sketch the geographies of Tswana relatedness; the ways that kin relationships are defined, sustained, and adapted through specific spatial practices, over time; and the role of *dikgang*, or conflict and negotiation, in these processes.

In the sections that follow, I examine the ways that space is used, managed, and experienced by Batswana. First, I identify the matrix of places that constitute the Tswana *gae*, or home – a common framing of kin space largely absent from or under-analysed in ethnographic work on the Tswana household (see, e.g., Klaitz 2010: 102; Morton 1997) – and the practices of staying, movement, and work over time that identify and integrate those spaces. Specifically, I suggest that these practices define and delimit kinship, in part by producing *dikgang* (risks, conflicts, and irresolution) which are, counterintuitively, critical to the family’s coherence. In the second section, I look at building and the spatio-temporalities of self-making (*go itirela*), and consider their implications for understanding Tswana kinship and personhood. And in the final section, I examine the spatial dynamics and temporal legacies of governmental and non-governmental (NGO) programming launched in response to AIDS, and analyse the effects these programmes have had on the dynamics described elsewhere in the chapter and the *dikgang* they generate.

Ko Gae: House and Home

I seldom slept in. It was usually impossible. Cars were starting, children hollering, buckets banging, and chickens screeching from early in the morning. But this particular Saturday morning, my sleep went uninterrupted until the gathering heat set

the corrugated iron roof ticking as it stretched, sometime past nine o'clock. I woke in what was otherwise an uncanny silence.

I emerged from my room, stretching and curious, into the *lelwapa* (courtyard). I saw no-one. It was not yet mid-morning, but the stitched-together sacks and blankets dragged out for the children to sleep on the night before had been tidied away, the space swept, and tea boiled and drunk, its dregs left in cups scattered across a table in the outdoor kitchen.

It was no small feat for the yard to be so thoroughly unpeopled. Four generations were intermittently in residence, from the elderly couple who had founded the household, through their seven children, eleven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, for a total of twenty-one (plus me) – though we were usually between eleven and eighteen at any one time (see family chart, p. 45). It was a large household, but then most of the neighbouring yards (and yards around the village) housed three generations, with a few better-off families housing only two. Typically, the house was teeming: with children playing or cooking, people sitting and chatting in the *lelwapa*, the men tinkering with vehicles in the yard, the women sweeping or mopping or laundering. But today it was empty.

I was perplexed. I stuck my head in the door of the main house; it was also empty. The three adult brothers who lived at home (Modiri, Kagiso, and Tuelo) each had rooms of their own in the main house, opening off of the living room. It was not unusual for them to be absent: they were often away during the week, working or on business of their own, and really only came into the house to sleep. Usually at least a few children could be found sitting on the cement floor watching the fitful signal on the TV; but today even the sitting room was empty. I passed through to the kitchen at the back of the house, where sometimes the older girls might be found cooking, but there were only empty plates scattered over the cupboard unit, and a tin of sugar standing open on the plastic table.

I exited through another door from the back of the kitchen to check the back yard. Customarily, the *segotlo* (backyard) of colonial-era Tswana households was a place of safety, refuge and protection (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 135) – also of hiding,

and latterly shame (Livingston 2005: 71, 184) – overseen by the mother of the house. The back yard at home, however, like its neighbours, opened through a large gate on to the street; it was used primarily for impromptu mechanics’ interventions with the vehicles, and for mixing and storing building materials, and in this sense struck me as the men’s space – though the children sometimes played there, and on hot days we all took advantage of the shade offered by its massive trees. But there was no-one here, either.

Heading back to the two-and-a-half-room house from which I had emerged, I tapped gently on Kelebogile’s door. She stayed in the room with her son, just across from the room I shared with Lorato. But there was no answer, and her door was locked. Initially I was struck by the fact that the women and children were situated around the margins of the houses, with the men – who spent rather less time at home – in their centre; but at the same time, the women were all closer to the *lelwapa*, and therefore to the heart of the complex as a whole. And while the colonial-era *lelwapa* was often linked to the *kgotla*, or customary court, as a male space (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 137; Kuper 1980: 17), at home it was certainly the women who occupied and oversaw it most – though everyone in the yard used it freely.

Gazing from our shared stoop across at the *isong*, or outdoor kitchen, I finally noticed two enormous, cast-iron, three-legged pots steaming over a low fire. The whole family spent a lot of time in the small, ramshackle *isong*; the children cooked, served and cleaned dishes there, and we all warmed bathwater, made tea, or just tended the fire and sat around talking, especially on cold nights. But given a cooking project as big as this, someone – probably Mmapula, the grandmother we all called *Mma* – had to be about. The door to her room – an extension that opened directly off the stoop, which she shared with up to seven of her grandchildren and occasionally her youngest daughter as well – was slightly ajar, which boded well. I pulled up a chair in the *lelwapa* and waited.

The *lelwapa*, or courtyard – where I had taken up my waiting – is the geographical centre and heart of the house, and the space in which much of shared family life

unfolds. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *lelwapa* also signifies ‘family’ in Setswana. *Tlogoya lelwapa*, the head of the *lelwapa*, is the head of the family; *go aga lelwapa*, to build a *lelwapa*, is both to build a house and to build a family. Family members may introduce one another as *ba lwapeng*, the people of the *lelwapa* – the people with whom one shares one’s residence. The terms that describe family, in other words, are explicitly spatialised from the outset; and they are explicitly located in (or in relation to) the *lelwapa*. And indeed, as we will see throughout this thesis, the *lelwapa* plays an important role in a variety of events and everyday practices that define, constitute and delimit family as well. It is not only the space where family members eat, socialise and sometimes sleep, but where important discussions are held, where visitors are welcomed and fed, where marriage negotiations are conducted, and around the edges of which parties and weddings are celebrated or funerals observed – even, in some cases, where people are buried. It is also a space in which grain is dried, laundry washed, games played and homework finished, and in which long hours are spent braiding hair, gossiping, or simply sitting together. The *lelwapa* is simultaneously public and private, and marks the overlap in those two categories: it is at the heart of the compound, but also in full view of the street; it hosts both the formal greeting of visitors and everyday acts of personal and household hygiene; disagreements internal to the family are settled there, but with dimensions of formality and display that encourage shame; and so on. Crucially, it is a space *in between* – in between the houses and other places of the yard, in between the family and its visitors or passersby – and it is in this in-between space that most living at home happens. Staying around, crossing and dwelling in the *lelwapa* together in the ways described, existing and relating in this multiplicitous fashion, is one important means of being kin.

At the same time, the Tswana are remarkably mobile in their residential patterns, frequently moving long distances to attend school, to stay with and help distant family members (see Chapter Four), or to find work. In these cases, they might refer to the places they are staying as *ko lwapeng* – at the *lelwapa* – even when they have no particular kinship with others living there. Especially when they are away from their natal families, the Tswana designate the place of their kin and origin as *ko gae* –

loosely, 'at home'. Indeed, the qualitative difference between the terms *lelwapa* and *gae* might be understood roughly as the difference between the English terms 'house' and 'home' – though each is, of course, constituted differently. As important as the *lelwapa* is to Tswana experiences and understanding of kinship, I would suggest its importance comes from the role it plays in anchoring the *gae* (cf. Morton 1997). What is the Tswana *gae*, then, and how is it constituted?

As I was contemplating the house from the *lelwapa*, Mmapula came out of her room, wrapping a heavy wool blanket around her waist. I sat up to greet her, asking where everybody was. "They've gone to the lands. I'm going out to check someone," she said, without further explanation. My Setswana was still too childlike for her to bother with long sentences. "Watch these pots. Look, like this," she added, lifting the heavy lid from one with a wire loop. It was full of broth and bones, a toothy cow jaw and socketed skull having floated to the surface. She hefted a long stick with a short fork at one end into the pot and showed me how to lift and stir. The smell of boiled marrow and rancid flesh was overpowering. "I'm coming," she added – as Batswana usually say when they are going. And so, shuffling out of the yard, she left me alone with my stinking, bubbling cowheads.

It was already early evening by the time people started to filter back into the yard. Mmapula had generalised a little in her description of their whereabouts. Kelebogile and Lorato had gone out visiting different friends in the village, and came home sometime mid-afternoon – in time, at any rate, to relieve me of cowhead-stirring duty. Modiri, Kagiso, Tuelo and a couple of the boys had gone out to the cattlepost (or *moraka*), a three-hour's walk northwest of the village along rough, sandy roads through the hills. *Moraka* consisted of a simple round, thatched hut (or *rondavel*) and large kraal, or kraal. The cattle roamed widely in search of water and good grazing – the lands they covered being shared and unfenced. The work of finding the herd, watering them, and checking their health was onerous. Kagiso and Tuelo had returned at nightfall; Modiri and the boys stayed out for the weekend.

For their part, Oratile, her two girls and three nephews had all gone out to *masimo* – the lands – where Dipuo, the grandfather of the family, lived most of the time.



Masimo (the lands). (Photo: D. Reece)

Masimo, too, was a three-hour's walk, in almost the opposite direction from the

cattlepost – roughly east of the village – and was a place I had visited frequently. It was a more developed site than *moraka*, having been the family's primary residence before they built in the village. It consisted in two dilapidated rondavels facing on to a rough courtyard; a covered cooking area; and a stout barbed-wire fence anchored by upright logs dug in around the perimeter. Its layout was roughly similar to that of the village residence. A small, thorn-fenced kraal stood just next to the yard, with a larger, more complex one for the goats perhaps twenty metres away. Several other similar complexes stood not far off, each perhaps a hundred metres from the others. The farmland itself was perhaps a ten minute walk away, across a dry riverbed; and it generated much of the family's maize meal and beans for the year, plus some to sell besides. Oratile, her eldest daughter and one nephew had stayed out there for the weekend, having been called specifically by Dipuo to help him with the goats. The two other boys, who had tagged along for company and to help out cooking and in the fields, found their ways back well after dark.

This weekly family migration was not, of course, unchanging. Not everyone left the yard every Saturday, and it wasn't always the same people going to the same places. Both men and women might stay at home to spend a morning doing their laundry; children might stay home to study, or play; women might put their efforts into cleaning the house and yard instead. If there were a funeral, wedding, or party to attend and assist with, these would be the focus of the weekend's journeys, residence

and work. Thus, the family's movements were not simply interpretable in terms of gender or age, though certain patterns are evident. *Moraka*, for example, was a place the men and boys usually went. In principle, everyone was welcome, but the women and girls in the yard (including myself) seldom tagged along. (In contrast, my brother – who visited the village for only a week – was insistently invited out, and eventually drawn into helping castrate the young bulls.) Modiri, as the eldest son, went there weekly without fail, and was not expected to go anywhere else. *Masimo*, on the other hand, was the purview of the elders. In fact, the family owned two *masimo*, the second over two hours' drive (or several hours' bussing and walking) away to the southwest of the village. Dipuo was resident in the nearby *masimo*, and Mmapula in the distant one, for most of my year with the family. But both men and women, boys and girls were expected to help at *masimo*, and went out and stayed at length when they could.

There was also a seasonal aspect to these movements (compare Schapera 1940: 27). In months of drought (including most of the winter), Modiri and any available brothers would be out at *moraka* daily, taking nutritional supplements to the cattle and ensuring the weaker ones had not become bogged down in the viscous mud surrounding their dried-up watering holes. Similarly, throughout the growing year – from times for sowing, through weeding and harvest – everyone would be expected to attend *masimo* as often as possible. The children were frequently called by Mmapula to join her at the lands for the duration of their school holidays; during quieter periods, parents would send out their children on their behalf. There was perhaps never a weekend when no-one went either to the lands or the cattlepost; movement out and back was as constant as the work was unrelenting, and everyone at home routinely undertook both. As a result, the family were often apart, separated and brought together in shifting patterns depending on age, gender, and the work of the season; and the people they stayed and worked with shifted too. In other words, it was not simply through staying and working together in the village *lelwapa* that the Legae family experienced kinship, but through staying and working with different

subsets of kin at the lands and cattlepost, and through being sent and called among all three places as well.⁶

Of course, movement is not simply an aspect of home or kinship for the Tswana. It is a critical element of sociality – and personhood – more broadly. It is no coincidence that the informal way of greeting someone in Setswana is to ask, *O kae?* – Where are you? (connoting ‘How are you?’) – quickly followed by questions about where you are coming from and where you are going (*O tswa kae? O ya kae?*). Visiting, accompanying (often described as ‘taking halfway’), and attending events are all major features of Tswana relationships, as we will see in the coming chapters; and each requires movement (Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005, 2010; Schapera 1940: 168).

However, the sort of movement undertaken between *lelwapa*, *moraka*, and *masimo*, its specific temporalities, and the work undertaken in each place (which we will revisit in more detail in Chapter Two), together integrate them into a specifically familial space – and simultaneously define who and what makes family – in several interdependent ways. The frequency of movement, and its regularity, is the first characteristic that sets it apart. There are no other spaces to and from which all (or most) members of a family customarily move, much less at such a distance, as often as weekly or in season-specific cycles. The paths between all three places are well-worn, and the journeys back and forth frequent enough to take on an almost continuous, perpetual quality. This sense of constancy is enhanced by the fact that family members frequently *stay* at either *masimo* or *moraka* (as well as *lelwapa*), for short, long, and even semi-permanent stretches of time. Lands and cattleposts, like yards in the village, are known by the names of the people who stay there: all three were known as *kwa ga boLegae*, the place of the Legae family (alternatively, the

⁶ This pattern of movement may indicate changes from the pre-colonial era patterns surmised by the Comaroffs, in which “[l]eaving their houses, women moved out seasonally to the fields, bringing back the harvest, while men moved daily inward to the ward and chiefly courts... spelling out the connection between the communal centre and the domestic periphery” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 137). Contemporary obligations to waged labour or school attendance are implicated. At the same time, I suspect the Comaroffs’ interpretation is rather too neat – eliding the movement of men and boys to the peripheral cattleposts, for example, and downplaying generational habits of movement as well – suggesting both complexities and continuities in kin movement that their model downplays.

names of age-mates of the speaker's from among the family would be substituted). And staying, with its associated ease of coming and going (both in the vicinity of each place and back and forth to the others), is very rare for anyone but people who identify themselves as family members.

The ways in which these movements and 'stayings' are mobilised are also critical to their unique kin orientation. As we have seen above, parents are able to call and send their children and grandchildren – even when the latter have become adults, and often over long distances – among these places, thereby establishing and responding to claims upon one another which work to reproduce the hierarchies and reciprocities of their relationships (Klaits 2010: 107, 119). These practices of movement, and the ability to mobilise it, are linked to the reasons for that movement – namely, obligations to contribute to the family's care. This rationale distinguishes movement among places of the *gae* from other sorts of work or care undertaken for friends, neighbours, and more distant relatives. While it is certainly deeply linked with kin spatialities (see Klaits 2010: 31-3; Chapter Two), we will return to the question of contributing care in more detail in Chapter Two. For present purposes it suffices to say that, taken together, the spatial habits described draw the house, the cattlepost and the lands into a coherent space that both defines and is defined by family – the *gae*.

It should be noted that having lands and cattleposts is not rare for Batswana (cf. Morton 2007: 165), nor necessarily a sign of special wealth (though both have ramifications for family prosperity). Even before the colonial era, Batswana men who married were expected to acquire not only a residential plot in the vicinity of their own relatives, but *masimo* for their wives to plough (one for each wife, in the case of polygynous households) and land to graze their cattle; and these acquisitions were arranged through ward headmen and chiefs (Schapera 1940:105,95). Virtually every family I knew in Dithaba had both lands and cattlepost, as did friends and colleagues elsewhere around the country; and those that didn't enjoyed – in principle at least – the government-assured right to acquire them free, much as individuals have a right to free residential land in their home village. Since Independence,

government has worked through Land Boards and *kgotlas*, the traditional village authorities, to ensure that citizens can be granted residential plots in their home villages and *masimo* nearby, as well as access to shared grazing on which *moraka* may be sited. In practice, residential plots have become harder to acquire as government prioritises people most likely to develop them quickly (a point to which we will return below); and increasingly plot owners sell their property privately. However, the political commitment to protecting access to *masimo*, *moraka*, and residential plots underscores the extent to which all are considered basic constitutive elements of the Tswana home.

Property beyond the *lelwapa*, lands and cattleposts enjoys no such privilege or integration, either in terms of care or movement. Mmapula and Dipuo owned a small house in a nearby town, which they rented out; but neither they, nor anyone else in the family, ever went to visit it, tend to it, or otherwise check in on it. Many of the family members were unsure where exactly it was. While it did generate a meagre, sporadic income, in other words, the rental property did not constitute a part of the family's lived experience of home.

The *gae*, then, is a divided, multiplicitous, scattered, and yet bounded place, defined and integrated by the movement, staying, and care-work of kin. Regardless of the other places in which one might work, live, or even build, the *gae* is the only place in which one nevertheless remains, and to which one is inevitably drawn back (compare Geschiere 2003). And yet, it is not changeless. As we have seen, there may well be more than one *masimo* or *moraka*; they are usually far removed from each other, and from the *lelwapa*; they may be used consistently, infrequently, or perhaps not at all; and indeed, they may be swapped, sold, acquired or given away with relative ease. They are also constantly being built and rebuilt (a point to which we will return below; see also Morton 1997). In this sense, the *gae* is not only multiple, but mutable. The continuous movement of kin between and among the spaces of the *gae*, to work and stay, therefore becomes critical to sustaining and integrating them. And this movement simultaneously binds people and places together, and keeps them

apart – articulating a tension between closeness and distance that defines not only the *gae* but the Tswana family itself (compare Stasch 2009:6).

This tension becomes even clearer in light of the ways *gae* are connected and reproduced. By custom, a Motswana has only one *gae*: either one's parents' home (including their *lelwapa*, *masimo* and *moraka*); or, in the case of a married woman, her husband's parents' home. In practice, however, even married women often speak of their parents' home as *ko gae*, emphasising its connotation with one's place of origin. When Mmapula took us to visit the yard in which she grew up – now uninhabited – she explained simply, “*Ke ko gae*,” this is home. Mmapula's ability to identify with two *gae* suggests the ways in which the movement of women in particular serves to connect *gae* with each other, while also keeping them apart (married women are strongly discouraged from returning to their natal homes except in very dire circumstances). Of course, when two people marry and found their own *lelwapa*, acquire their own *masimo* and *moraka*, they are establishing a new *gae* – not their own, but their children's. As this process often unfolds over a very long time indeed (especially contemporarily), they continue to bear responsibility for assisting with their parents' *gae*, moving among, staying and working in its spaces, and sending their children in the same paths. In this way, rather than simply splitting or fragmenting, the *gae* slowly but surely multiplies and expands. And I suggest it is in this expansion, in the breeding of new *malwapa* (courtyards) and new *gae* variously entangled with and yet separated from each other, that the spatialities of wards and villages are structured, sustained, and extended.

What are the ramifications of this scattered spatiality, the continuous movement it requires and the tensions it generates, for the Tswana family? Schapera warned of the “disintegrating tendencies of frequent separation” (1940: 178) – particularly in the context of labour migration – and suggested that “real intimacy and sympathetic understanding are often lacking” as a result, such that “home life...does not really exist” (1940: 173). In many ways, similar conclusions are echoed in contemporary discourse around AIDS and family breakdown. I suggest, however, that the ways in which Tswana kinship spatialities generate *dikgang* (‘issues’ of risk, conflict, and

irresolution) seem to strike a careful balance between closeness, distance, and movement that sustains and protects the Tswana family – a point that was first brought home to me one afternoon, when Tefo was beaten.

Going Up and Down: Tefo's Beating, Dipuo's Dalliances

Tefo's cry came sudden and surprised from behind the closed door, followed by steady sobbing. From the broad slapping sound that intermittently punctuated his wailing, I gathered his mother Kelebogile had taken a shoe to him. As she beat him she challenged him with a scarcely controlled fury: "Why do you like to go up and down so much, eh? Why don't you listen?"

I sat uncomfortably in the *lelwapa*, trying not to wince. Everyone else in the yard went about their usual business: Modiri sat drinking tea, leaning back in his wooden chair; Mmapula sat on the stoop with her feet straight out, chatting intermittently with Oratile. The girls moved efficiently between the pot on the fire outside and the kitchen, carrying chopped vegetables or maize meal or utensils with a little more alacrity than usual. There was a studied avoidance of the beating happening behind the thin door of Kelebogile and Tefo's room.

I leaned over to Boipelo, Tefo's older cousin, and asked what had happened and whether the beating didn't seem a little harsh. "Ah, Tefo is always going up and down, his mother's been telling him for days that it's not OK," she explained. "Every afternoon he takes long to come home from school, then goes out to play with the neighbours, or he goes to the shop. He comes late. When she calls him he is far, she can't send him for things."

"But a shoe?" I asked, discomfited.

"Tefo doesn't listen. It's a problem (*kgang*). He needed to be beaten. It's not good that she's beating him in the room," she said, pausing a moment. While the children were not beaten often, when they were it was almost always out in the *lelwapa* or

yard. “But you see that she didn’t lock the door. That means it’s still safe. Any of us could go in at any time. She did that so she doesn’t lose control.” The shoe didn’t seem to be of any particular concern.

“Why doesn’t he run away, if the door’s unlocked?” I asked, with Tefo’s cries beginning to wane with exhaustion.

“He can’t,” she answered simply, as if it were an obvious impossibility.

Tefo was not the only child to be beaten for ‘going up and down’, and it was an accusation frequently levelled – both jokingly and disparagingly – among the adults at home as well. Movement in itself presents the possibility of both mundane and mystical danger: car, bus and combi-van accidents are frequent and often fatal (MVA 2010), and witchcraft can be worked on the traces of people’s movements, including their footprints (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275). But beatings and chastisements were seldom framed explicitly in terms of concern for safety. More often children were scolded or adults teased either for moving too much, in the wrong ways, or for being in the wrong places at the wrong times.

On the way from school, Tefo might go to play football for a while, then pass by the shop, then stop to play at the neighbours’, instead of coming home directly to change out of his school uniform so it could be washed for the following day. Even if he did come home to change clothes, he often roved so far afield that his mother could not call him back to send him for anything – whether mobile phone units, things from the neighbours, bread, or other simple items. Calling and sending are crucial means of expressing intergenerational relatedness and age hierarchy for the Tswana: adults frequently exercise the right to call children for help (or to account), and to send them on errands; and children are expected to (and mostly do) respond immediately and without complaint. Indeed, the two words perhaps most commonly used by adults when speaking to children were *tlakwanyo*, and *tsamaya* – come here, and go. Phrases like *o a bediwa*, you are called, were commonplace; and children were often sent to others with that message. In all cases, these words and instructions were

inappropriate for use with one's peers or elders, but were used frequently with children and adults younger than the speaker; and they served continuously to articulate a relationship of power and responsibility in which elders were entitled to direct the movement of their juniors. In this sense, Tefo's absences destabilised his relationship with his mother – by making it difficult for her to look after him (in the above case, by washing his clothes) on one hand, and by making it difficult for him to be called for and sent by her as befitted his responsibilities as her child. It was this risk of destabilisation, rather than one of his personal safety, that Tefo ran when 'going up and down'.

Tefo followed his mother around like a shadow for perhaps two days after the beating. He sat on the ground next to her chair, went in and out of the bedroom whenever she did, and followed her around the yard. By the second day she had become annoyed, and snapped at him: "*Hei!* What do you want here (*mo go nna*, lit. 'in my place')? Go!" She raised her hand at him threateningly. Initially he refused to budge, but soon he was moving around the yard more freely again; and within a day or so, he was playing with the neighbours in the lane as was his usual wont.

The final interaction of this episode aptly illustrates the central difficulty presented by the tension between closeness and distance in the spatialities of the Tswana family: finding the appropriate *balance*. Strain, tension, and outright conflict – *dikgang* – emerged when this balance was upset, either because kin were too far from or too close to one another, were not moving (or available to be moved) in the right ways at the right times, were in one another's spaces at inopportune moments, or were otherwise 'out of place'. This disordering of people and place, in turn, could only be managed by drawing closeness, distance, and movement back into appropriate balance – in both cases with the threat of violence. It was a similar process of disordering and reordering space, I suggest, that was at work when Mmapula's husband Dipuo's feet swelled up.

It was early evening, and Dipuo had come in from the lands unexpectedly. He sat on the low wooden chair in the corner of the *lelwapa* he favoured, near the room the old

woman and children slept in. He'd hung his hat on the back of the chair, had pulled off his shoes and socks, and was rubbing one foot absent-mindedly. His feet and ankles were swollen, thick and round – unsurprising for a man in his mid-seventies having just walked several miles in the heat, I supposed. Then he stretched back into the hard chair, and spent the rest of the evening calling and sending the boys on various errands, or upbraiding them for some chore overlooked or some uncouth comment.

He was still home for a number of days thereafter, which was decidedly unusual. We seldom saw him at home for longer than a day and a night, maybe two, generally at the beginning of the month when he'd come to collect his meagre pension from the post office. Otherwise he was almost always at the lands. It was an arrangement that suited everyone, as he had a cantankerous streak and a penchant for provoking disputes. But for the time being, one of his sons had been sent out in his place, and he remained in the village.

Things had been particularly bad with Dipuo for several months before my return. First, Mmapula had discovered that he had taken up with the neighbour, a woman who had been widowed the year before. As well as being neighbours in the village, they were neighbours at the lands; even their children, in residential plots assigned to them in a different neighbourhood, were neighbours. While his wife was ploughing and tending several acres at the family's other, far distant farm on her own, the old man stayed at the lands near the village and became more and more unwisely entangled. He diverted dribs and drabs of money and part of his harvest to the widow and her family; and he began to opt out of settling disputes or engaging in ongoing issues at home. In the most dramatic incident, shortly before my arrival, he had unilaterally decided to sell most of the family's donkeys and give the money to the widow for some expense of which she had complained. Mmapula suffered much of this ignominious treatment stoically, muttering and occasionally attempting to talk sense into him. When she found out about the donkeys, however, she rebuked her husband roundly and damningly in front of their children, and spoke of her contempt

for his behaviour openly at home. “*Haish, ke kgang e tona,*” Lorato noted of the situation – it’s a big issue.

Dipuo’s ill-advised liaison had created any number of awkward situations for his children and grandchildren as well. Some months before my return, he had been in the neighbour’s yard, and had heard an accusation from one of the younger children there about an exchange of threats and insults with one of the younger children from his own yard. Immediately he had summonsed the accused child, and his eldest grandchild Lorato as well, asking her to act as mediator in resolving the dispute. She had been appalled – and was still appalled, judging from the incredulity with which she recounted these tales to me. “Imagine! Calling his own children to *someone else’s yard*! And what did he want me to do there?”

Adults in Botswana are generally free to discipline the children of their friends, neighbours, or even strangers, and will do so without compunction. And I often saw children respond to such discipline with humility and respect. But such situations only really arise in public places, or in the disciplining adult’s own yard. By calling his grandchildren into the neighbour’s yard, Dipuo was behaving as if he was *of* that yard, and had assumed the role of disciplinarian in it. Indeed, it was as if he had decided to take the neighbour’s children as his own, and take his own children as if they were simply neighbours. This confusion of places and the swapping of roles and allegiances it connoted was distasteful and hurtful in its own right; but what made it ridiculous to Lorato was that, having adopted this new position, the old man could not engineer a reconciliation without relying upon his old position and the claims to which it entitled him. By calling both the accused child and Lorato in as the mediator, in other words, he was calling himself out; emphasising his inability to discharge a basic role in mediating *dikgang* and meting out discipline among his experimentally-assumed kin by having to rely on his established kin to pull it off. The physical distance from family created by his living at the lands made room for an upending and rearrangement of relationships, and for confusion about Dipuo’s ‘proper place’ to emerge. But at the same time, that distance had its limits; and to the

extent it could not convey upon him a total break from his family, his connection to and reliance upon them was reasserted.

As his feet swelled up, Dipuo's behaviour began to change. The change was out of necessity more than choice: he couldn't walk without pain. And so, for a short time, he stayed at home, did not go to the lands, and made only brief visits out of the yard. But then he went to visit his *ngaka*, or traditional healer, and was advised that his feet were swelling up because of his inappropriate dalliances – and that they would continue to do so until he stopped. No-one I spoke to made any claims about the causality at work, but Schapera (1940: 195) recorded the attribution of various afflictions to liaisons with widows whose blood was still 'hot' (a marker of dangerous sexuality due to their closeness to death), and therefore dangerous. Regardless, Dipuo's children had a clear sense of the justice in the situation. He had been going up and down in ways he shouldn't, ways that were hurtful to his family; an illness that curtailed his movement and forced him to behave appropriately had therefore afflicted him.

Perhaps a week after this diagnosis, Dipuo was back out at the lands, his feet improving. And it seemed he had left off his extra-marital fling. While he would continue to distress and confound his family in other ways, there were no more stories told of ongoing improprieties with the neighbour. And on the rare occasion when they both found themselves at home from the lands, he and his wife would sit up late with their heads together by the fire, sharing news, apparently reconciled.

Reflecting on the colonial era Tswana house and village, Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 137) conclude that male spaces, and by symbolic extension, agnation were encompassing of female spaces and matrilinearity. The situation of Dipuo and his sons, however, suggests a rather different experience of gendered space. Dipuo himself was seldom at home, living more or less permanently at the far-flung lands (traditionally a female space; Livingston 2005: 67). While his adult sons seemed to occupy the heart of the house, they were at the same time farthest from the *lelwapa*; and they too spent relatively little time there, gravitating towards its margins for their

work when they were present. Indeed, the freedom of male movement among the places of the *gae* – which echoes the freedom of movement a husband customarily would have had between the houses of wives in a polygynous compound (1991: 132) – is perhaps the only contemporary corollary of colonial-era encompassment; and it carries with it a definitive sense of displacement and marginalisation. Moreover, it is a mobility shared by women and children alike. In these examples, the analytically neat parallel encompassments of male spatiality and agnation seem to collapse. Both Dipuo's transgressions and his affliction suggest the frustrated negotiations of a deep instability in the ideal orderings of male space and movement – and, by symbolic extension, of the relative priority of agnation over matrilinearity. Unsurprising, then, that risk and conflict, or *dikgang*, should emerge.

Following Schapera (1940: 173, 178), we might be inclined to assume that the ultimate source of these *dikgang* is distance, continuous movement, and staying apart. Certainly these factors might be said to have provided the space for Dipuo's transgressions and the familial conflicts they sparked. Notably, however, Dipuo's indiscretions were not met with attempts to collapse or erase distances. He was not called to stay at home; neither his wife nor anyone else in his family moved to stay with him. Nor was he excluded or cut off from his family's usual visits to work and help. Rather, his relative distance was, on the whole, carefully maintained. Any attempts to 'solve' the problem of the grandfather's waywardness by bringing him closer, I suspect, would have upset the delicate balance between distance and closeness we have been examining. The necessity of maintaining distance suggests that intimacy and proximity, too, present risks of *dikgang* which distance helps ameliorate. (These risks, of course, are not simply spatial, but also draw in other dynamics that create intimacy and mutual dependence, to which we will return in Chapters Two and Three). Further, the family's response to the suitability of Dipuo's illness – which seemed to target his ability to move freely across the distances that defined his place – seems to suggest that *dikgang* produce illness as a matter of course; and the management of illness is also, ultimately, understood to be the management of *dikgang* (compare Livingston 2005: 10).

As much as it helps to alleviate *dikgang*, then, the continuous work of keeping familial closeness and distance in appropriate balance – and the specific measures required to do so (from beatings to reprimands to visiting and paying traditional doctors) – is often a source of further anxiety, strain, and conflict among families. As we will see over the coming chapters, the work of coping with these strains presents further issues and requires further management, creating a cycle of conflict and irresolution that is – I suggest – constitutive of the Tswana family. Out of this cycle and the variety of tensions that generate it, a dynamic in which individual family members feel simultaneously driven to leave and deeply compelled to stay develops. The attempt to balance this need for simultaneous nearness and distance from one's family is perhaps best understood spatially in the process of *building* – which is as critical to the development of Tswana personhood as it is to reworking kin relations.

'Ke a Aga': Lorato, Building

*Go nna le lewapa go monate
O ja dijo o kgobile
O ja dijo o sa shebeshebe*

*It's nice to have your own house
You eat until you're full
You eat without looking over your shoulder*

-Kuweletsa, Culture Spears

Lorato and I leaned against our square-edged spades, looking out across the dry, yellowed patches of farmland to the brick-red hills beyond. The afternoon heat was merciless, and the landscape shimmered with it. We had been clearing a rocky, steep slope at the top of Lorato's plot of the plantlife that had colonised it over the years, in preparation for digging the foundation of the house she would build there.

The plot sat high on the slope of a hill that separated it from much of the rest of the village, and it commanded a rare view. It had belonged to Lorato's mother Keitumetse, who had begun developing it years previously, not long before her death. Close to where we stood, the contours of a foundation trench could be

discerned in the tall grass, partly backfilled over the years with gravel and stone swept down the hillside by the rains. After Keitumetse's death, Lorato's grandmother had conscientiously transferred the plot into Lorato's name – a rare gesture at a time when family squabbles over the inheritance of land and property were rife. A few stacks of moulded cement bricks, window frames, and other material stored up against building were taken back to the family plot – a twenty minute walk away – and incorporated into its continuous building projects.

Several years had passed, and as Lorato entered her mid-twenties the local Land Board had begun to exert pressure on her to develop the land, or lose it. The Ministry of Lands and Housing oversees Land Boards in every district, and their role is to manage the distribution of tribal land (as it is called) among local residents. Previously this role had lain with village chiefs, who apportioned land to their headmen, who in turn distributed plots so that applicants – usually recently-married men – could settle among their extended family (Schapera 1940: 95). After Independence, this function had been centralised at District level, such that land tended to be apportioned with greater randomness than before, depending on which areas of the village the Land Board had marked for expansion and development. Currently, both men and women, married or otherwise, can apply for plots. Building, then, is no longer simply about establishing a marital home near the husband's kin, but about moving *away* from one's parents and siblings whether one is married or not.

Until recently, new plot owners had borne a responsibility first to mark the corners of their plots with fenceposts (an echo of pre-colonial practices of marking off land with 'doctored' pegs, perhaps – Comaroffs 1991: 134); and then, within five years of taking possession, to fence their plots fully and build at least one structure – even an outhouse. But demand for plots had skyrocketed in the village, especially as they acquired a market value for resale to people from around the country looking for places to live within commuting distance of the capital. The standards of what constituted 'development' had skyrocketed proportionately. The plot not only had to

be fenced, a full house had to be in construction to prevent the Land Board from simply reassigning it to someone else.

Lorato's grandmother Mmapula was quite concerned that they should retain the plot, and had set aside a small amount of money from her farming income – an amount roughly equivalent to the building supplies she had acquired at the time of Lorato's mother's death. It was unlikely to go far. Lorato herself was equally concerned. "It is the only thing I have left of my mother," she commented.

By the time these details emerged I had been staying with the Legae family for some time. The unspoken request in Lorato's and her grandmother's account of the plot was no less plain for its omission. After much weighing and consultation, I decided to help finance the building through a series of loans, partly provided by family and friends in Canada. Once built, we reasoned, the house could be rented out until the loans were repaid. The money available, however, was still not a great deal; and the only way to build the house affordably was to do as much of the work as possible ourselves. By the time we stood taking in the view, we had already been digging and hauling truckloads of river sand for making bricks at home; and we would spend much of the coming months hefting cement, quarrying dense pitsand, ferrying water and backfilling concrete as the house progressed. We were often helped in these heavy tasks by Lorato's younger cousins and aunts; of her uncles, only the youngest, Tuelo, assisted – and only on condition of being paid as a piece-worker.

We commissioned a neighbour, Rra Dita, with the building of the house, and he saw it from its design stages through to the finished structure. Already well into his fifties, he lived just a few yards over from Lorato's family, and had built the house I stayed in, as well as another on Lorato's uncle Moagi's plot. In his gnarled, worn-out workboots, his green workman's trousers, his torn shirts and the soft hat slung back from his forehead, he looked like any other piece-labourer in the village. But he had a contemplative gaze and a habit of speaking in riddles, which gave him an air of philosophical wisdom. He was fond of asking imponderable questions, looking askance at his befuddled listeners, and laughing heartily before changing the topic.

Lorato retreated into the shade of two stunted trees, and I followed. Rra Ditau resumed his fight with the recalcitrant weeds, his spade clanging and jarring against the stones.

“You think I can get married now, if I have my own house?” Lorato asked, pensively. Surprised, I asked why it would matter.

“Ah, you know these men,” she said, gazing out at the lands. “They want to be the ones who give you everything. They don’t like this idea of women having their own things, their own jobs, their own money. And imagine, a house! Actually, I might not even live here. A man would want me to live at his place.”

I was quiet, puzzling over whether I had inadvertently created a problem by trying to help (a niggling doubt familiar from years in development work). Of course it was traditional practice for men to take their wives to live in the men’s natal neighbourhoods or villages; the Tswana were customarily virilocal, and the



Building. (Photo: author)

administrative
sub-units of
villages –
wards – had
historically
marked off
extended
virilocal
families
(Schapera

1940: 95). At the same time, in practice a substantial proportion of couples stayed with the wife’s family while waiting to build for themselves (1940: 97). Further, as we have seen in the Introduction, marriage preferences for parallel as well as cross-cousins created such an entangled field of relationships that a man and wife (and their families) might be related in several different ways at once in any case –

making the question of whether they were living virilocally or uxorilocally rather more difficult to answer, and prone to variation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 132).

Currently, the situation has changed somewhat. Now it is common for a married couple to settle away from both of their natal homes, depending on where work and opportunity can be found. The practice of settling and building elsewhere is not altogether new: Lorato's own grandparents had settled away from their natal homes in a nearby town, after all, first at the lands and later in Dithaba itself. Indeed, most of the married couples I knew lived away from both spouses' natal homes, and many lived apart – even on opposite sides of the country – depending on where one or the other was posted for work. This said, regardless of where married couples lived for work (but particularly if they are based in towns or cities), they generally still built in the husband's home village – *ko gae* – as well.

Of course, many people I knew – men and women alike – had not yet married by the time they began building, though most of them had had children (see Chapter Three). A house was an asset against hard times, at least, a place to begin a family, a potential source of independence and income, surely? Or did these things in themselves inhibit marriage?

The unanticipated social repercussions of building didn't end with marriageability. A few nights later – helping us offload a truckload of riversand, down to the last grains caught in the ridges of the truck bed – Rra Ditau put his finger on another. We had been discussing a growing unwillingness among the adults at home to loan us the truck for building work, in spite of our having borne much of the costs of its maintenance and upkeep. Unusual claims had been made, like the suggestion that various items we had to buy in town wouldn't fit in the truck bed (though we'd transported similar items without difficulty before). "How do you think your aunts and uncles feel," Rra Ditau asked Lorato, in his quasi-rhetorical way, "about the fact that you are building first, before they do?" "*Haish! Ke kgang,*" she had answered, shaking her head – that's an issue. Only her uncle Moagi had already finished building a small house of his own, as well as the one in his parents' yard, in which

we stayed. The eldest uncle, Modiri, had swapped his plot for a combi van; and another of her uncles, Kagiso, was on the endless waiting list for new plots (and had exerted some pressure on Lorato to give her plot to him to build on, not long before). Her aunts, Oratile and Kelebogile, had plots of their own but no houses. When Kelebogile had tagged along with us to see the progress of Lorato's house, she had been surprisingly disparaging: "Just at window height! And this, and this, problems. You still have so far to go!" Reflecting on these tensions, Rra Ditau laughed his philosophical laugh. "Well," he said non-committally, "I guess you're killing them at home. But you have to build for yourself."

We dropped Rra Ditau back at his yard that evening, and went in to greet his wife, who was busy cooking fatcakes over the fire. We sat on one of the long benches against the stacks of old four-and-a-half-inch bricks that gave rough, low walls to the *isong*. Mma Ditau was congratulatory about the building project. "You are becoming a woman now," she affirmed to Lorato, smiling; "you are becoming a person!" Lorato was skeptical, and asked why building conveyed such sudden status. "To have your own yard where you decide what to eat, people take you seriously...!" Mma Ditau explained, bending to examine the fatcakes in the hot oil. Lorato herself – like many others I knew who had begun to build – had often framed her dreams of having her own house in much these terms: being grown up, being free of the constraints and conflicts of home, and being able to eat what she liked. When she wanted to illustrate to people just how adult, independent and self-directed she was, she often simply said, "*Ke a aga*" – I'm building – which invariably earned her reactions of surprise and respect.

But it was a burdensome dream. "I'm too young to be taken seriously, I don't want people to take me too seriously!" Lorato rejoined, looking dismayed. Mma Ditau laughed generously, reassuring her.

Building a house is a considerable achievement: a testimony to the material resources and personal relationships that one can mobilise for the task. The Tswana have long

considered it an achievement fundamental to founding a family of one's own, and to developing as a person independent of (if still bound to) one's natal family (Schapera 1940: 103). The Setswana term for building, *aga*, echoes etymologically in the words for peace, harmony, and reconciliation (*kagiso*, *kagisanyo*, *agisanya* – see Klaits 2010: 31), each of which connotes helping one another to build. Building relies heavily on a range of relationships, and materially instantiates and perpetuates them (Morton 1997). Indeed, building is in many ways symbolic of living; as an informant of Livingston's pointed out, "without building there is no life" (2010: 85; see also Klaits 2010: 85). But like most such achievements, it is fraught, and generates *dikgang*; and these *dikgang* derive from a new uncertainty and unreliability in the very personal relationships the builder has put to work constructing the house in the first place (or might involve in the ongoing process of building in future). These uncertainties, in turn, are exacerbated by the new distance the builder is establishing between herself and the people she has relied upon – largely family – by building apart. I would argue that it is this production and acquisition of *dikgang*, beyond the self-making work of mobilising relationships and materials for construction, that gives building its salience for Tswana personhood – and also for Tswana kinship.

But Lorato's story also underlines another critical dimension of building, of the spatialities of kinship and personhood, and of the *dikgang* these engender: their temporality. In all three of the exchanges described above, the problem was not simply that Lorato was building a house, or where or how it was being built; the problem was with *when* it was being built. Lorato was building not only before marriage, but before having children – a time when her major responsibilities were still to her natal yard (especially once she had a steady job, as we will see in Chapter Two). She was building before most of her aunts and uncles, including Modiri, her mother's brother or *malome*. She was building for herself before she had built for her parents – something many of her aunts and uncles had done (Moagi by building the two-and-a-half-roomed house in which we stayed, and Kelebogile and Kagiso by tiling the house, installing plumbing, and making various other major infrastructural additions; see also Livingston 2005: 15). And, as neighbours frequently commented, she was building fast; most of the house was completed in under a year (though,

importantly, it was never entirely finished). Lorato was building out of sync, out of turn, and out of time; and these dystemporalities were all sources of *dikgang*.

These temporal twists derived from a number of sources. First, there was the matter of early inheritance: Lorato was only 14 years old when her mother died. Inheriting property so young is unusual among Batswana, and a possibility that only really began to arise with the advent of the AIDS epidemic. In fact, Lorato might not have inherited the plot at all; her grandmother might have retained it, sold it, or given it to another of her children, and been well within her rights in doing so. Given that both she and her other children were (at the time) favourably situated with plots – and in a context where complaints of property grabbing from orphans had become a hot topic of discussion everywhere from *kgotlas* to social workers' offices and popular media – Lorato's grandmother made the decision to transfer the plot to Lorato. A local orphan care NGO in which Lorato was registered, and the local social worker, assisted in the process. But formalising the inheritance wasn't sufficient to normalise its dystemporality; as Kagiso's pressure demonstrated, so long as the plot was undeveloped, it remained potentially subject to claims by older kin who were ready to build.

In consultation with other arms of government, the Land Board had suspended its usual development requirements in cases like Lorato's. No specific new deadlines for development were given, though it was rumoured that inheritors like Lorato might only have five years to develop from the age of majority (18). Given the scarcity of jobs and the expense of building, even this apparent leeway was altogether insufficient – especially as applications for plots in Dithaba began to outstrip the availability of gazetted land, and the Land Board began reclaiming and reassigning plots that had not been suitably developed. Government-linked charitable organisations like the Masiela (Orphans) Trust Fund got into the building game in anticipation of these scenarios, mostly where orphaned children in destitute families had inherited land (Masiela Trust Fund 2015); and NGOs also built houses *ad hoc* for child clients in difficult circumstances (see Chapter Six). People like Lorato and

her family had few options – other than connections to someone like me, whom they had met through their involvement with NGOs.

Charitable organisations, NGOs, and associated individuals alike were able to mobilise much larger immediate capital than most builders would have access to all at once, a situation which – in concert with Land Board pressures – speeds up a building process that is otherwise undertaken over years, if and when materials and labour are available. And whether because they needed to prove the timely disbursement of funds to donors (like many NGOs), or whether they only had a limited time to be involved in the work (like me), these additional figures were all working on different clocks – and therefore knocking builders like Lorato out of their proper time. In this sense, the untimely death of Lorato's mother inserted Lorato (and her family) into what we might gloss as a transnational humanitarian project on the one hand, and a national development project on the other, in some unpredictable ways – which introduced unprecedented influences on the spatio-temporalities of her family and her own trajectory towards personhood.

Several months later, Lorato's house was nearly finished -- a state that turned out to be perpetual, as most building in Botswana is – and we sat on the wide stoop, taking in the view. Her neighbour immediately down the hill had recently finished a small two-and-a-half of his own, and its clean corrugated tin roof glared in the sun. I asked whether she'd ever spoken to him.

“He's late,” she said, using the sensitive Setswana idiom for death.

I was taken aback. The house had been finished less than a month before. The neighbour had only recently moved in, having never really stayed at the plot before (though it had a pre-existing structure). She explained that he had died in his sleep. It was several days before his body was found.

I asked what had happened – whether it might have been witchcraft born of jealousy, on account of the new house. But Lorato shrugged and shook her head, unconvinced.

“*Ga re itse*,” she said, we don’t know. “But that’s why I don’t like the idea of staying alone.” As much as she had dreamed of building for herself as an escape from the pressures of staying at home, to stay alone – and therefore to be seen to have been building for oneself (Klaits 2010: 86) – was not only unconscionable, but dangerous. “They are going to want to teach me a lesson, you know, at home,” she added, almost as an afterthought.

Lorato did stay in her house for a short while, almost experimentally – not alone, but with two younger cousins who came to help, and who were similarly eager for some space away from their family. The adults at home accepted this arrangement for the time being, but were insistent that all three girls should make themselves available to

help at the lands and at home. They lasted less than two months. Partly, juggling obligations at their natal yard with jobs and the work the new place required had become too



Lorato’s house. (Photo: author)

onerous for the distances and time involved, creating an ongoing battle with the family at home. Partly, it was too difficult to keep everyone fed; and partly all three missed being in the bustle of home. The dystemporalities of Lorato’s building project, the profusion of overlapping, ongoing obligations in disparate places they entailed, and the instability of other relationships that might have supported her, made staying away ultimately too difficult to manage. She was as yet unable to sustain, through space and over time, the relationships, responsibilities, and potential *dikgang* that living apart – and continuous self-making – entailed (and which the perpetuity of building might be said to symbolise). As such, she had to return home. At the time of writing, the house remains empty.

The temporalities of humanitarianism and development projects, then, of government and of non-governmental organisations, seem to have unexpectedly important roles to play in the spatio-temporalities of Tswana personhood and kinship. In the final section of this chapter, I describe the spatialities of governmental and non-governmental agencies in the village that work directly with families like Lorato's, and examine the ways in which they interact with the spatialities of the families they serve. I ask what patterns of movement they create, enable, or require, what closenesses and distances they observe, and what *dikgang* these spatial dynamics generate. While there are many such agencies and programmes, focusing on everything from poverty alleviation to community development, here I focus on those oriented towards care for people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. Many of these agencies' spatial characteristics and practices closely mirror those of Tswana families, but I suggest that important differences arise which disrupt kin spatialities, and expose them to *dikgang* that the family is less well equipped to absorb.

Getting In, Taking Out: The Geographies of Intervention

Much has been written about the transgressive spatialities of the AIDS epidemic; of the practices of moving, staying away, returning and attempted containment that exacerbate it; and of the complex interactions between movement, work and wealth, and medical care (e.g. Comaroff 2007; Dilger et al. 2012; Farmer 1992; Klaits 2010: 40-5; Thornton 2008: 74-76; Weiss 1996: Chapter 7). In this section, however, I take as my focus the spatialities of programmes offered by government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to those infected and affected by AIDS, rather than the spatial dynamics of the epidemic itself.

Mpho sat on a hard, narrow bench in front of the social worker's office, waiting. It was only quarter past seven in the morning, but she was not alone: three other women, their heads scarved and their waists wrapped in woollen blankets, sat quietly

with her on the shaded stoop. The Social and Community Development (S&CD) office shared a small two-room council building with the Water Affairs office, in the southern corner of the village near the highway. At this hour, the doors and burglar gates were still locked tight, though the pedestrian and vehicle gates in the low fence stood wide open as usual. One could never tell whether one would get to see any government official on any given day, but showing up before they started work at seven-thirty was usually the best bet.

Mpho was a neighbour of the Legae family in her late fifties, and had recently lost her eldest daughter Kedi – who left behind three daughters of her own: one already an adult, the others thirteen and nine years old respectively. Mpho had been raising Kedi's girls since shortly after they were born while their mother worked in the city. When Kedi had first returned to stay in the village, already quite ill, a friend of Mmapula's had visited them and encouraged mother and daughter to register with the local home-based care – a non-governmental organisation (NGO) perhaps fifteen minutes' walk from their home. It was a beautiful building, with several offices and meeting rooms, a kitchen and a large garden in its expansive yard, the whole surrounded by a high fence overgrown with bougainvillea. It stood facing the main street to the *kgotla*, though its main gate came in off a side road. After some hesitation, Kedi had agreed to register.

Staff at home-based care had then helped register Kedi with the local social worker – at the very office in front of which Mpho now sat – so she could receive the food basket designated for people living with HIV. They had also taken responsibility for driving Kedi back and forth to the town half an hour's drive away where she picked up her antiretrovirals, as well as for trips to doctors and clinics outside the village – trips that would otherwise have been expensive and exhausting to make by public transit. They visited the house frequently during Kedi's illness, sitting and praying with her and talking with Mpho about any problems she was having. Occasionally either Kedi or Mpho might be invited to workshops or events at the home-based care building, or in nearby towns, as well.

After Kedi's death, the home-based care volunteers had encouraged Mpho to return to the social worker and register her two youngest grand-daughters as orphans, so that the family might receive the orphans' food basket, and help with the costs of school fees, transport, and uniforms as well. Mpho had first come to the social worker's office – perhaps a half-hour's walk from home – the week before. What she hadn't realised was that she would need her daughter's death certificate to complete her granddaughters' registration. Retrieving this certificate had involved a trip to the hospital in the largest village in the District, almost an hour away by bus and combi – easily a day's project, including all the asking and waiting involved.

Today, Mpho was luckier. The social worker was in at seven-thirty, and saw her quickly, registering the girls in a large ruled notebook and opening client files for each of them, with assurances that they would begin receiving their food basket (see Chapter Two) from that month's end. Mpho was then directed to yet another agency: the local orphan care NGO. It was another half hour's walk away, but this time closer to Mpho's side of the village at least.

She set out along the dusty red pathways in the gathering heat. She had heard mixed reports about the local orphan care NGO; many complained about the people who ran it, and the children registered there were earning a reputation for being spoiled and disobedient. But the NGO fed the children lunch and a small afternoon meal; it was a place for them to go in the afternoons after school, and maybe they would get help with homework. The children there were often sent home with presents – schoolbags, clothing, shoes. Perhaps, Mpho thought, it would help what strained resources she had available at home stretch a little further.

The orphan care was settled on an enormous plot, close to the dam and *kgotla* at the centre of the village. It comprised several buildings – classrooms, offices, a hall and kitchen among others, making it almost as large as the nearby schools – and had large open spaces for play and small-scale cultivation, all encircled by a high fence topped in barbed wire. Occasionally children who were not orphans hung from the fence, watching their friends from school playing or eating inside, often in the

company of foreign volunteers. Mpho entered the gates with some hesitation, and was quickly ushered into the office next to them. There a secretary took her granddaughters' details, told her briefly about the services provided, and asked that she send along the girls the next day to be shown around. Mpho herself was shown back out of the gates, and would only enter again later that year when specially invited for a Christmas event.

Over the months that followed, there were still other registrations. Another NGO based nearby, a Christian organisation that ran counselling camps in local game reserves for orphaned children a couple of times a year, had been sent to Mpho by the social worker; and they had signed on the girls as well. And then Mpho had been called to a meeting at the school – the social worker popped up here again too – to be briefed about another organisation that took Standard Seven students (like her eldest) out on therapeutic wilderness retreats to places as far away as the Okavango Delta. Soon it seemed to Mpho as if the girls were never at home: they would come in the evenings from the orphan care centre; on major school holidays they were often out on camps; even some weekends there would be events and trips of one sort and another. Sometimes she wasn't altogether sure *where* they were. When she tried to call them, send them for things, or take them along to the lands, they began to refuse and to argue.

In Mpho's registration journeys, certain consistencies between the spatialities of intervention and of kinship emerge. Like kin places, places of intervention are many, varied, and often distant from one another. They require and also enable movement, which client and agency staff or volunteers undertake together, frequently enough in some cases as to be almost perpetual. Each might be understood to be a place where the work of care is undertaken in some way. Agencies position themselves with a certain authority over the family by both calling and sending not only their clients, but their clients' parents and grandparents; and by being themselves somewhat difficult (though not always impossible) to call or send in turn. While this self-

placement at the top of the spatial hierarchy of kinship has the potential to rankle – something to which we’ll return – it fits the logic of kinship spatialities nonetheless.

And yet, there are clear distinctions to be made. Clients, for example, seldom stay with the agencies in which they are registered, and certainly not with any regularity or for any length of time. Residential orphan care has been scrupulously avoided in Botswana (though many social workers and NGO staff have recently begun to suggest this should change). Such care work as is undertaken under the auspices of each agency, though in some ways similar to the care work undertaken in the spaces of the *gae*, is not undertaken jointly between client and agency, but only by the latter on the part of the former; and only in very loose terms might it be seen to contribute to their joint prosperity (a question we will return to in more detail in the next chapter).

Perhaps most importantly, the patterns of movement undertaken by agencies differ sharply from those undertaken by kin – especially in terms of their *direction*. As we have seen, kin move between the spaces of the *gae*, in a constant coming and going that inevitably gravitates back to the *lelwapa*. Mpho’s movements to, among and from the various agencies founded to engage her family also mimicked this directionality. However, the majority of organisations described specialise in moving *outwards*. The NGOs that take children out on therapy retreats are an obvious example of this tendency; but home-based care trips to clinics and workshops, or social worker subsidies for transport to school, also mark the same pattern. Referrals onwards and outwards, constantly expanding a client’s responsibilities for movement, are another onerous dimension of this tendency. Perhaps most importantly, these movements rarely take in the *lelwapa* of clients at all. While all of the agencies described purport to undertake home visits, very few (with the exception of home-based care) do, and those they make are infrequent. This apparent avoidance distinguishes government and NGOs not only from kin, but from neighbours, friends and colleagues, for whom visiting is critical to maintaining social relationships. It was not uncommon for people to reflect disparagingly on social workers in these terms, complaining that they stayed in their offices or were away at

workshops when they should be moving around the village. To some extent, the types and directions of movement agencies undertake are reminiscent both of the problematic aimlessness of ‘going up and down’, and of building: they involve moving away from the *lelwapa*, partly as a means of establishing and entrenching an alternate base. (Notably – regardless of the often prohibitive costs involved – non-governmental agencies right across Botswana were quite insistent about building their own centres, rather than working through existing facilities or in an exclusively home-based manner.) In both ways, distance is continuously produced, and becomes a defining spatial characteristic of the relationship between agencies, clients, and their families. And, of course, this extending distance serves to throw the careful balance Tswana families manage between closeness and distance off-balance.

But perhaps the critical spatial features of NGOs and government offices alike are the *boundaries* they establish – and destabilise. Like every yard, shop, or business, both government offices and NGOs were marked off with fences and gates, some of them quite intimidating. But more than these, they created bureaucratic boundaries: one cannot access them without appropriate referrals, without proof of claims (in appropriate paperwork), without registering, without waiting and often being turned back. Even once these requirements have been met, access is controlled: Mpho was not allowed in past the office of the orphan care centre, except for invitation-only special events; she would not be taken along on the childrens’ retreat camps, nor see the offices of the NGOs that ran them; she had had minimal access even to the building of the home-based care project. Her granddaughters, in turn, may have found it difficult to approach the social worker’s office without Mpho present, though their access to all of these other spaces was unfettered. Boundaries to each of these agencies, then, created differential claims of access that distinguished Mpho from her granddaughters.

Of course, homes also have boundaries: fencelines at yards’ edges, the low wall that distinguishes the *lelwapa*, the walls of the house that define spaces of sleeping, bathing, and intimacy. And each boundary works to exclude specific groups: suitors may not pass beyond the yard’s fence; visitors must announce themselves when

entering the *lelwapa*, and will not usually pass beyond it; and the interior spaces of the house are reserved for immediate family, close friends and occasionally neighbours, with the bedrooms of adults usually off-limits even to these. In this sense, we might see the boundary-making work of NGOs and government offices – like others of their spatial practices – as a process of creating an alternative, family-like space and set of allegiances by creating alternative sorts of boundaries.

At the same time, limiting access to these alternative spaces has profound implications for the relationship of family to organisation, and for relationships within the family as well. Above, as we listened to Tefo's beating, Boipelo made an important point in this regard. Tefo's mother had left the door open, enabling the entire family to enter, should it prove necessary. While no-one actually went in, the fact that anyone *could* enter held her accountable and kept Tefo safe. In other words, it kept the beating within the family's sphere of access, and therefore subject to its oversight and authority. Where the whole family cannot enter – or where one member of the family can, as a client, and the others cannot – its systems of authority and responsibility is effectively suspended, and its relationships rendered meaningless. Spaces that limit family access, then, effectively undermine the families they purport to strengthen.

In this sense, places of intervention appear to lack the integration – either with one another, or with the *lelwapa* – that we saw was characteristic of the *gae*. Indeed, we might say they are defined more by their fragmentation. Of course, government social work offices and NGO programmes are not necessarily intended to integrate with one another, or with the homes of families they serve – so, while it may offer a useful distinction from kin spatialities, this fragmentation is perhaps unsurprising. At the same time, the two spatialities are not simply distinct. The similarities that intervention spatialities bear to kin spatialities link the two, enough – as Mpho's consternation with her recalcitrant granddaughters suggests – to disrupt the spatial practices and integration of the *gae*. In their similarities to kin spatialities, and in their focus on creating alternative spaces away from the *gae*, intervention spatialities seem to suggest direct competition.

The shape of this issue began to emerge in Mpho's story above. Not only was Mpho unable to send or call her grandchildren on errands, for work around the home, or to the lands; she was no longer always certain where they *were* at any given time. There were many occasions during my time in Dithaba where children and teenagers returning home from the orphan care centre would choose to take their friends halfway, stop and hang about on the train tracks, or go off for illicit meetings, not returning until after dark. The centre, already shut, took no responsibility for these situations (and could hardly track seventy children across the village in any case); and their families, uncertain whether special events at the centre might be afoot, whether their children had or hadn't been sent home, did not know when to expect them. Arguments between the adults at home and the children dallying en route – about missed chores, unwashed school uniforms, missed meals, their unavailability and undesirable goings up and down – became frequent. Children resisted and avoided these, spending even more time away, adeptly deploying the sheer variety of possible excuses to do so (Dahl 2009a). They developed a reputation in the village for being children who didn't listen (*ga ba utlwe*), who were disrespectful, lazy and contrary, even for frequenting bars (and being otherwise 'out of place'); and they were beaten at school and at home accordingly. A cycle of worsening tension and conflict, of serious *dikgang*, emerged. While this situation presents perhaps an extreme example – going well beyond the *dikgang* that other programmes generated – it is nonetheless illustrative of the potential such fragmented interventions present, by the proliferation of 'in between' spaces (in competition with the anchoring 'in-betweenness' of the *lelwapa*) that such fragmentation creates. Notably, the *dikgang* arising were borne primarily by clients and families, rather than the centre or any other organisation; and they went unaddressed by those organisations, while being outside the family's capacity to ameliorate them. Unlike Dipuo's illness, they presented no obvious means of management. The new risk they represented, I suggest, was not simply a matter of people being in the wrong places and the wrong times, or being unavailable to be moved as they ought (though it was these things as well); it was produced in the assertion of a spatiality that competes with and disrupts that of the family.

Of course, once these risks have been compounded enough to generate all-out conflict, the agencies I have been describing *do* have one alternative open to them. Visits home – by social workers and the orphan care project in particular – were rare, but they tended to be reserved for *interventions*: the confrontation of problems, usually reported either by the child or from outwith the family, undertaken inside the family yard. Often these take the shape of formal discussions, though in worst-case scenarios they could involve more serious accusations, the calling of authorities, and (on the part of social workers) the removal of children. Interventions are, I suggest, the final and most powerful means of disrupting kinship spatialities, because they turn the spatial dynamics of *dikgang* inside out. As we saw above, conflict within families is usually dealt with in a two-stage process, depending on its severity: first, by calling anyone involved in the *dikgang* and key mediators (often uncles) *in* to the yard; and second, by taking the issue *out* of the yard, generally by going to agencies like the *kgotla*, common-law courts, *dingaka* and so on. In interventions, the issue is taken *in* to the yard by people from outside of it; and in worst case scenarios, family members are taken *out*. The spatial practices of the agencies described create a further inversion as well: through the management of distance, movement, boundaries, and interventions, government and NGO spaces become difficult to access and acquire a dimension of exclusivity; whereas the space of home becomes fully accessible, and to some extent comes under the control of such agencies, making it uncontainably public. While interventions of this sort were extremely rare, both NGOs and social workers had established an open claim to them; and this claim was in itself sufficient to pose the threat of such inversions. And as the forthcoming chapters will illustrate, these spatio-temporal inversions and disruptions underpin and echo through several other comparable legacies of agency intervention in turn.

Conclusion

In reflecting on ‘housing activities’ and the emplacement of sentiment, Klaitz (2010) offers a pithy explication of the double meaning implicit in the greeting, *O kae?*

(where/how are you?): “*where you are* affects *how you are*, both in terms of your relationships to others, and...your physical well-being” (2010: 120; italics in original). To this observation, I would add that the questions which usually follow, and which head this chapter – *O tswa kae? O a kae?* Where are you from? Where are you going? – suggest not only the Tswana proclivity for constant movement, but a sort of short-hand assessment of relationships to home and family, and of progress in self-making, of which stayings and movements are taken to be emblematic. As we have seen, both are subject to constant negotiation and significant uncertainty, and perpetually produce *dikgang* – the management of which concerns striking the right balance between closeness and distance, mobility and availability, scatteredness and unity, delimiting and ensuring both the coherence of family over time and the possibility of personhood in the process.

Of course, AIDS – an epidemic in which movement, closeness and distance have taken on pathological dimensions – might be understood as just this sort of *kgang*, suggesting that long-standing practices of managing space among kin might be better-suited to dealing with the epidemic than popularly assumed. However, to the extent that governmental and non-governmental responses to the epidemic have misread the dangers in kinship spatialities – and therefore introduced new spatial logics and practices that invert and transgress them, and new timelines besides – their coping potential has been sharply undermined.

At the same time, the ways in which families – or intervening agencies – manage space over time are not the only ways in which they negotiate their relationships. As Dipuo’s example above suggests, the work you are doing and the things you are contributing or withholding in the places in which you stay and among which you move – or in others besides – have similarly fraught and contradictory implications for both kinship and personhood. In the next chapter, I turn to a consideration of Tswana practices and understandings of care; their implications for kinship and self-making; the *dikgang* they generate; and the effects on these dynamics of AIDS-era programmes and interventions.

Chapter Two

“Who is Taking Care of Your Things?”: Care, Contribution, and Conflict in the Economies of Kinship

Kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go pataganelwa.

A full bag of locusts is gathered when everyone works together.

“If something like this happens, about something we agreed upon as a family, you don’t just keep it to yourself. You call a meeting to hear everyone’s opinion on the matter, because everyone has a part to play and we all own something that needs to be taken care of,” insisted Kagiso, speaking quickly and earnestly. His voice carried across the yard.

It was a clear night in early winter, and the sky was thick with stars. All the adults at home were gathered round the fire, packed tightly into the *isong* (outdoor kitchen) – but it was hardly a convivial scene. Dipuo had recently come from the lands, and Mmapula had alerted him to a growing animosity between two of his sons, Modiri and Kagiso, over the herdman who had recently been hired to help tend the cattle. Dipuo had called the two men and their sisters together. The wood on the fire hissed and sparked inauspiciously – something I’d been told was a sign of coming conflict.

“What I want to know is whether you have consulted Moagi,” Kagiso picked up from where he’d left off. Moagi was the second-eldest brother after Modiri, and lived on the other side of the country, though his son stayed with us at home. “You cannot consult other siblings while others are left aside. We all stay here. Are you telling me if Moagi got married you’re not going to consult him about things here at home? And what about Tuelo [the youngest brother]? Do you mean that if tomorrow Lorato isn’t working, you will keep her away from meetings because her contribution doesn’t matter?” He swept his arm around the half-circle of his siblings, indicating each in turn, attempting to draw them all into the issue.

“Let’s not talk about people who are not here,” his older brother Modiri deflected. “Moagi stays far away and he won’t manage. We can’t stop this issue (*kgang*)

because of him. If I see your cow straying I won't say it doesn't belong to me, I'll just take it back to the kraal."

"Kagiso is just being difficult, he keeps on saying he wants Moagi but he can see he is not here. He should focus on what belongs to him, and so will Moagi," asserted Dipuo.

"So are you all saying I'm just provoking a fight? You hired this man, but I don't know anything about him at all. I just want to know, has Moagi been informed?" Kagiso repeated.

Some months previously, the brothers had all agreed that it was time to hire a herdman to look after their cattle. Modiri, the eldest, had borne the major burden of the work up to that point; but as his small transport business began to get off the ground, it became difficult for him to spend extended periods at the cattlepost. The cattlepost was unfenced, and the cattle had a habit of wandering off if they were left for too long, making for several days' work in finding them. They needed regular attention. Most of the brothers were employed full-time, and could not pick up the slack; and none of them trusted the youngest, Tuelo, with the work, since he'd lost the entire herd once before. A herdman was the only option.

After the brothers had taken the decision, Modiri identified and employed a herdman on his own initiative. Since that time, however, Modiri alone had been paying the man's wages and providing him with food. He'd become angry about his brothers' refusals to help. Kagiso took the position that he had not been consulted on the choice of herdman, the amount of his wages, or the terms of his employment; and in the absence of this proper consultation, he refused to contribute. It had become a *kgang*, or issue, and quickly drew in a wide range of other *dikgang* the family had been grappling with – most of which concerned the balance to be struck between consulting one another and working together, on the one hand, and looking after individual interests, on the other.

“Kagiso, stop arguing. I don’t hear anything you are saying, you are talking nonsense,” his mother Mmapula rejoined. “A long time ago we were all working together (*re ne re dirisanya mmogo*). Girls would look after cattle, not just boys. There were no disputes (*medumo*, lit. noise) like this. I am very disappointed....” Mmapula trailed off.

“I don’t really understand where we are at right now,” noted Lorato, entering cautiously into the fray. “I feel like I’ve come into the middle of something. But I’ve observed that in this family we don’t talk, we are scattered. When anyone wants something they do it on their own without consulting anyone, that’s why you see everyone wanting to have what’s theirs. There is nothing that belongs to all of us as a family. We don’t have co-operation (*tirisanyo mmogo*, lit. working together).”

“When these arguments started I took them lightly,” opined Dipuo; “I thought, as they are siblings (*bana ba motho*, lit. children of a person) they will resolve it on their own. I was just telling Modiri that for a long time you have not been talking through things together as a family. He said he doesn’t like discussion (*puo*). I can see you have no ties at all.”

“Oratile, have you heard what your brother is saying?” asked Mmapula, trying to draw her daughters into the discussion.

“I hear him,” responded Oratile shyly. “I won’t say if he is wrong or not, but I feel it won’t be fair on others to contribute while others are left out. Whether you work or not, if you own something that needs looking after, you have to take responsibility.”

“When Kagiso mentioned he was buying food here I thought someone would ask him if he knows about the cooking,” Modiri intervened. “The pot is being cooked at the cattle post,” he added, meaning both that the herdman was being fed there and that the cattle were being taken care of. “The problem is that someone has been buying food at the cattlepost,” he said, pointing to himself, “while someone was buying for the village,” he concluded, gesturing dismissively at Kagiso.

“This issue could have been resolved long ago,” rejoined Kagiso. “I also said if Tuelo was not here I won’t sit for the talks. And here we are, he’s not here.”

“Let’s leave that issue, those who are not here will be told.” Dipuo was growing impatient. “What kind of a person are you, Kagiso? You said you’ll take what belongs to you,” he added, provocatively. Kagiso had reputedly threatened to separate his cows from the family herd a couple of days previously.

“I want this issue to be over,” Kagiso answered, simply.

“Kagiso!” Mmapula was exasperated. “If this issue finishes the way you want it to end, does that mean you’ll just be there on your own?”

“I’m just taking my cows, but anything else that needs discussing as a family I’ll be part of it,” he replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

“No, if you’ve been used you’ve been used (*ga o jelwe o jelwe*, lit. if you’ve been eaten, you’ve been eaten),” Modiri interjected bitterly. “This issue will never finish. Kagiso can take what belongs to him, it’s no problem. I looked after his cattle, if that’s how he thanks me it’s fine. Now he should just tell us when he is going to take what is his so that I can be there.”

“I’ll tell you when I decide,” answered Kagiso evasively.

“And who will be taking care of your things? They’re in my kraal, eating my food, being looked after by me. You want to take them, you should say when,” insisted Modiri. “And the cow I gave him is not going anywhere. I’m taking it back,” he added, becoming livid. He had gifted Kagiso a cow earlier in the year.

“No, don’t do that,” their mother admonished him. “He is your child, just give it to him. Tomorrow he will come back to you when things are not going well, leave him.”

Modiri snorted. “I want to do my work,” he said, standing abruptly and stalking off into the night.

In this chapter, I examine the Tswana model of care, or *tlhokomelo*, and the crucial role it plays in constituting both family and personhood. I suggest that ambiguities in that model, and the dual imperative to which it is put, create profound tension; and that *dikgang*, or processes of conflict and irresolution, are critical in negotiating those tensions and preserving those adaptive ambiguities. Specifically, drawing on the work of Frederick Klaits (2010; see also Livingston 2003, 2005), I suggest that care is expressed through specific things and the work involved in producing, acquiring, and looking after those things; and that the things and work of care are conceptually interdependent. I argue that expectations and provision of care – framed primarily in terms of *contribution* in kinship contexts – define, establish and adapt specific kin roles by gender and age, and articulate shifting generational frames as well, while being subject to contestation and refusal. At the same time, much the same things and work of care are required *go itirela*, to make oneself and assert one’s personhood – though to this end they must be either accumulated or contributed elsewhere, potentially or actually at the expense of one’s family. Like other tensions kinship encompasses, these generate continuous disputes, which require families to navigate their intractable contradictions in a way that asserts continuity while making room for contingency and adaptation. As a result, I suggest that care is an ongoing object of crisis for the Tswana. In this sense, the ‘crisis of care’ in terms of which the AIDS epidemic has been cast may represent more a difference in degree than a difference in kind, a heightening of stakes and a shift in symbolic terms more than an unprecedented event.

Care occupies an increasingly important role in contemporary anthropological understandings of kinship, particularly in the context of AIDS (Dahl 2009a; Dilger 2006, 2008; Henderson 2011; see also Borneman 2001). While it has undoubtedly provided a fruitful avenue of investigation, it runs the risk of presupposing its own conclusions by taking as read the prevalent assumption that AIDS has produced a crisis of care. It also runs the risk of uncritically conflating emic and etic notions of what constitutes care, thereby replicating the ethnocentric bias for which kinship studies have been upbraided in the past (Schneider 1984). Klaitz (2010) has effectively adapted the notion of care in his study of apostolic churches in Botswana's capital, and provides a rich, nuanced sense of what care means and how it works among the Tswana. He argues that Tswana care is signified simultaneously in specific things and in the work they enable and entail (2010: 4). Crucially, this thing-work enables relationships with others; and in its intersections with love, scorn, and jealousy, it has powerful intersubjective effects, producing (for example) illness or well-being in and through others' bodies (2010: 4-7; see also Durham 2002: 159; Livingston 2005, 2008). In other words, care is a critical means of cultivating mutuality; the ways in which Tswana families belong to one another – as Aristotle's felicitous phrasing had it (cited in Sahlins 2012: 21) – are sharply affected by their management of and work around the things that belong to them, individually and collectively. At the same time, the work involved in acquiring and looking after these very things, and the relationships that can be formed and extended through them, are also a critical means of self-making, and therefore of personhood (Durham 2006: 117).

Klaitz – and others who situate their research predominantly in extra-familial contexts in Botswana (Dahl 2009a; Durham 2000, 2004, 2006; Livingston 2005, 2008) – foregrounds a discourse of doubt around the reliability of kin care, and links this to parallel discourses of family breakdown (e.g. Klaitz 2010: 1-3). Both he and other authors writing from similar perspectives seem to take these discourses at face value, focussing instead on alternative networks of care that people create through churches, youth groups, NGOs, and the like. While there is no question that Botswana frequently complain about kin care, and actively recruit large extra-

familial networks of care, I am skeptical that these networks are meant to (or do) replace kin. In contrast, I suggest that care, in its simultaneous orientation to creating relationships with others and to making the self, and its potentially fraught intersubjectivity, has friction and conflict built into it; and that constant contestations around care signify the adaptive continuity of kinship rather than its breakdown. In the case of kin, I suggest the flashpoints around care – the terms in which people most frequently cast the failures of family – are in fact the points at which roles and relationships are most powerfully re-asserted, adapted, or re-made; and also the points at which personhood is able to emerge within the context of kinship. As we will see, complaints about the inadequate provision of care by kin (or others with comparable responsibilities) often preface claims or acts of self-making, and ground the establishment of additional care-oriented relationships beyond kin that are necessary to that process. In this sense, seeking kin-like relationships outside the home might be seen more as a project of self-making consistent with one's continued role in the family, rather than an attempt to replace negligent kin. In this chapter, I will fill out the conversation on care and kinship in Botswana by re-grounding it in the *gae*, or home – which, as we saw in Chapter One, it helps define; and by taking a longer-term perspective on the processes and effects of care and its contestations.

I frame my discussion of kin care in the same terms Batswana most commonly gloss them, as evident in the dispute above: as *contributions*. Analytically speaking, *contributions* sit awkwardly – but perhaps productively – between the realms of gift and commodity, being both and neither. I often heard 'contribution' used in the English, and its roughly interchangeable counterparts in Setswana have similar connotations. *Seabe*, from the verb *go aba*, suggests something divided, shared, or given away (Matumo 1993: 348). *Dikatso* suggests things given in payment for services rendered or anticipated (Matumo 1993: 34). The term 'contribution' connotes both a thing and an act, noun and verb; and as such, it bridges objects and work in ways that are not only suited to the Tswana understanding of things and of care, but to gifts and commodities as well. Like both gifts and money, contributions rely on other contributions, and beget further contributions in their turn (as we will see below), giving them a cyclic, continuous temporality and generative potential. At

the same time, contributions are not burdened with the dyadic transactionality that both gift exchange and commodity trade imply. They make room for the multifarious ways in which things and labour are drawn into, produced in, and moved around families, owned and used both individually and jointly, thereby going beyond a series of exchange links each between two people. Indeed, in this sense they aptly represent the Tswana kin ideal of *tirisanyo mmogo*, working or making together. And they helpfully adapt the moral framework of exchange to incorporate this multiplicity and collectivity as well, making room for sorts of exchange that produce both interdependence and independence, togetherness and danger, at the same time. While contributors expect something from their contributions, their concerns with reciprocity are focused less on getting a return from what they put in, or on whom is receiving what; instead, they are focused on whether others are contributing in equal and sufficient proportion (as we saw in the dispute above).

‘Contribution’ is analytically effective in these ways, I suggest, because it is one key means by which things and work are drawn together and transformed into expressions of care. In Bloch and Parry’s (1989) terms, we might say contribution shifts things (including money) and work from the short-term, individual, acquisitive transactional realm into the realm of long-term exchange concerned with the reproduction of the social order. And it is a transformation that can be effected by both men and women, children and adults, if through different things or tasks and in different ways. Roles and relationships among kin – including their relative generational positions – are established, adjusted, and re-asserted in the idiom of contribution accordingly. However, in contrast to some of the modes of transformation described in that volume, contribution is never complete or total (symbolically or in practice): something is always held back. And what remains, whether it is kept for personal use, given away, or contributed elsewhere, is obscured and kept secret – making it subject to considerable uncertainty, conjecture and suspicion. More than this, contributions are often reversible. This holding-back, obscuring and reversibility is crucial in enabling family members to retain the things, undertake the tasks, and build the relationships of their own that constitute personhood. Thus, for example, it enables men to save money against the cost of

brideprice and weddings, women to clothe their children and pay school fees, and both to provide gifts to lovers or to build houses. In this sense, individual acquisition, gifting and trade – apparently characteristic of the short-term exchange order – may predicate some long-term exchanges through which the social order is reproduced, while at the same time unsettling others; and whether a given acquisition, gift, or contribution is working on long-term scales, or will remain confined to the short-term, is often only evident in hindsight (compare the negotiation of marriage in Chapter Three). Among the Tswana, then, not only is the separation between short-term and long-term transactional orders rather indistinct, but transformations from one to the other are often tenuous and partial; and the structural and moral tensions between the two, and by extension between kinship and personhood, are therefore not so neatly resolved through those transformations (cf. 1989: 25). Like other tensions explored in this thesis, I suggest that these are instead continuously negotiated in practice through a process of conflict and (ir)resolution, or *dikgang*.

By prioritising contributions, I do not mean to say that gifting cycles are absent from Tswana kinship or Tswana notions of care. On the contrary, gifts are critical means of establishing and expressing care in both parent-child relationships (including between siblings, with siblings' offspring, and so on) and intimate relationships. Where contribution emphasises collectivity and to some extent collapses generational hierarchy (as we will see), gift-giving provides an important corollary in differentiating and reasserting hierarchy. Gifts given or received in the context of both relationships and parenthood are seldom shared and often hidden, even hoarded, and they have a crucial role to play in establishing personhood as well. In the interests of space and in keeping with my ethnographic material, this chapter prioritises the dynamics of care and conflict around contributions; but gift-dynamics will provide important counterpoints – especially in relation to governmental and NGO contributions – and we will revisit them in later chapters.

In the present chapter, I follow a few key 'care things' as a sort of ethnographic thread through my argument. As I have suggested in my definition of care, the essence or 'thingyness' of these things is less at issue than what people do with and

through them, and the relationships that are thereby built around them (*pace* Heidegger 1950; see Appadurai 1988); and it is in this sense that things and the work they involve are mutually interdependent. Much as the spaces and places of Chapter One took their relevance from how people used, built, and moved through them, things in this chapter take their meaning primarily from how they are acquired, distributed, used, looked after – and, of course, fought over.

There are any number of specific things that might provide apt threads to follow through the dynamics of care and contribution in making kin and making people among the Tswana. However, Batswana explicitly articulate the priority of some things over others. The dispute recounted above consistently returns to two of the most important: cattle, and food. Others include clothes, household goods, and access to cars and cash. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these things overlap with the things prioritised by NGOs and government in their family support programming. Accordingly, in the stories that follow, I focus on these priorities; the contributions and care they involve; and the conflicts, or *dikgang*, they produce. In the first section I focus on the dynamics of care, contribution and conflict that emerge around cattle and food, primarily among siblings – establishing their specific, gendered relationships to one another and a surprisingly fluid generational model as well. In the second section, I move to a detailed consideration of how personhood is asserted or claimed through contributions and their refusal, within the family and without, successfully and otherwise. Food and cattle will reappear, and cars, cash, and household goods will all figure as well. In the final section, I look at how government and NGO contributions of care can be understood against these backdrops, and the ways in which their attempts to resolve the epidemic's 'crisis of care' has created new crises in turn.

The Pot is Being Cooked at the Cattlepost: Contribution and Conflict Among Children of One Womb

Bana ba motho ba kgaogana tlhogwana wa ntsi.

A person's children share even the head of a fly.

Maraganateng a bana ba mpa ga a tsenwe.

Conflicts among children of one womb are not intruded upon.

Cattle

It was about 2am when the long, mournful cries started from the far corner of the yard. I was used to the sounds of roosters crowing, donkeys braying, trains passing, and cowbells jangling through the night; but this sound, nasal, plaintive, almost childlike, was a new one.

“What *is* that?” I asked quietly, unsure whether any of the other girls in the room had awoken.

“*Haish!! Ngwana wa ga Modiri!!*” Lorato exclaimed with frustration, pulling a pillow over her head.

Modiri's child. Modiri didn't have a child. But the day before, he had arrived home from the cattlepost with a doe-eyed, gangly calf. Its mother had died, and knowing it would not otherwise survive, Modiri had brought it home to rear it himself. As someone who was rough in his manner and liked to threaten the children with a *sjambok* (whip), he had presented an anomalous figure as he lifted the tangled calf gently out of the back of the truck, murmuring reassurance.

It was an especially harsh winter. There was a drought, and the cattle had little to eat, little to drink, and were getting mired in the mud of dried-up waterholes without the strength to pull themselves out. Modiri travelled between home and *moraka* (the

cattlepost) daily to help the herdman, ferrying feed and medicine back and forth, and occasionally bringing home the carcass of a cow he'd lost for cooking and curing. It was onerous work. But every evening, without fail, he carefully mixed milk and medicine into a two-litre glass soda bottle, attached a rubber nipple, and fed the calf by hand. It followed him around when he was at home, nosing his hand or the pocket of his jeans – to which Modiri would react with mixed annoyance and indulgence. The rest of the time, the calf wobbled on its awkward legs freely around the yard, the boys keeping an eye on it and ensuring the gates were closed so it couldn't wander off. At night Modiri closed it into the makeshift kraal in the corner of the yard; and without fail, after the household had settled into silent slumber, it would start lowing pitifully.

Modiri was the first-born son of the family, and his parents had given him a name popular among first-born boys: Modisaotsile – 'the herdman has come'. The name was perhaps less a premonition than a prescription. 'Herdman' uncannily described Modiri's position in the family, as if having defined his contribution to it from the outset. And it was a critical, powerful position. Like many other places in Africa, in Botswana cattle are a repository of wealth, and form the backbone of family relationships. Cattle remain a fundamental component of *lobola*, the bridewealth paid by the groom's family to the bride's to secure a marriage (Chapter Four). Siblings were historically 'cattle linked' in anticipation of this expense, such that the cattle a married sister brought in to the family would be earmarked to enable the marriage of her linked brother (who would later bear special responsibilities to his linked sister's children, as their *malome* [maternal uncle]; Kuper 1975). Indeed, cattle have been so important that the practice of parallel cousin marriage – unusual in the region (see Introduction) – was cast in terms of keeping a family's cattle together (Schapera cites the proverb, "Child of my paternal uncle, marry me...so that the cattle should return to our kraal," 1940: 42). Cattle are contributed predominantly to family, to celebrate wedding feasts, initiations and parties of all kinds; to mark funerals; and to make major purchases, as for building houses. They may also be contributed to enable development projects (the University of Botswana was built partly from public contributions of cattle).

But cattle do not simply produce and define kinship structurally in their exchange; they are also emblematic of care, both as things and in the care they require. *Lobola*, for example, is provided to recognise the care a family has contributed towards successfully raising a marrying daughter; to transfer her responsibilities for the contribution of care to her husband's family; to contribute towards her brothers' successful marriages and self-making (as they herd the cattle in their turn); and to link the two marrying families together in ways that they can continue to claim help and contributions from one another, especially through the couple's children (Chapter Four). Having a boy who could assist in herding the cattle – which is customarily, though not exclusively, the work of boys and men – eased the work of cattle herding and enabled the acquisition of a larger herd. The child's contribution afforded the family's expansion of wealth, ties of kinship, and reproduction of itself. And Modiri's assiduous fulfillment of his name's promise had just that effect. Calling Modiri's calf his child was partly playful; but it also recognised the care Modiri invested in the cattle, and put it on par with parenting as a contribution critical to producing and reproducing the family. When his father Dipuo was away at the lands, Modiri acted and was treated as the head of the household – and this role partly conveyed, and was partly conveyed by, his responsibility for the cattle.

The cattle Modiri herded were not his alone; nor did they belong exclusively to his father. Indeed, the old man had perhaps only one cow left. The rest belonged to Modiri and his younger brothers. When they were teenagers, they were each presented with one or two cows in recognition of their contributions to the care of the herd (a fact which embittered their eldest sister Boikanyo, since she had also spent much of her time herding as a child but had received no such recompense). Gradually they had increased their stock, individually setting aside money – mostly from wage labour – to buy additional heads of cattle. The brothers' cattle all shared the same brand, however, and the same pattern of cuts and notches out of their ears, which was Dipuo's and marked both the cattle and the donkeys as belonging to the same family. I was mystified by how the men could tell their cattle apart. The older boys could distinguish individual donkeys and cows by their hoofprints in the sand,

however; and given the time the men spent among the cattle, getting to know their markings and responding to their habits and health, individuating the herd must have been easier for them than it seemed. In any case, herding separately-owned cattle together marked them as the men's contributions to the family; motivated the contribution of the family's men and boys in their care; and enabled them to be contributed to events and projects that either extended the family or connected it with other families, producing a long-term cycle of contribution and a vast range of relationships in its wake. Moreover, this cycle described both the men's movement into adulthood and a gradual generational transition, as cattle were contributed to care-contributing boys, as their opportunities to contribute out of wage labour expanded, and as their responsibilities to contribute to others grew.

Much as they shared a brand, the adult brothers also shared the responsibility of care for the herd – though equally, much as they owned the cattle individually, their responsibilities to contribute were individuated. All were expected to go to *moraka* (the cattlepost) at the weekends, if they were home; and each was expected to contribute to the cost of food, medicines, and a full-time herdman who would mind the herd, in keeping with their relative income. These shared responsibilities asserted the adult men's siblingship. Of course, what they were each able to contribute differed depending on their individual circumstances (and willingness to do so); and this differentiation indexed their relative influence and power in the family. Thus, Modiri's seniority was achieved by taking – and obliged him to take – the lead role in cattle-care. Moagi's absence with the army meant his contributions were limited to his holidays at home, when he was expected to be generous with his time and money. By the same token, he was somewhat distanced from the daily concerns of the family, except when he was home. As Kagiso's success in business grew, and his capacity to contribute financially, so too did the respect he was shown at home; though the constraints that his work driving for a local NGO placed on his time at the cattle post had other effects (as we will see shortly). The fact that Tuelo had fewer cattle and unsteady work meant his contribution was somewhat irregular and mostly in labour – which gave him a reputation at home for being unreliable. In other words,

the brothers' shared responsibilities served to individuate them as much as bind them together.

The ways in which cattle bind brothers to sisters, and enable sisters' personhood, also becomes evident if we think of them in terms of contribution. As well as contributing incidental care for the cattle in girlhood, women have the potential to make perhaps the most substantial contributions of cattle to the herd through their marriages. While binding spouses and their families in the idiom of care (as we saw in the example above), these cattle bind sisters to their brothers, whose personhood – whether established in the continued care of those cattle, contributions of those cattle elsewhere, or the use of those cattle to secure marriages of their own – they enable, and who bear an obligation to contribute to the ongoing care of their sisters' children in turn (itself a sort of self-making). The relationship established by this cycle of contribution binds siblings together in perpetuity through their marriages and children, which might otherwise be expected to divide them (Kuper 1975). In other words, through contributions, siblings' separability becomes a source of their sustained togetherness.

Of course, the tensions between siblings' unity and separability, equality and hierarchy, as well as between their ideal contributions and their actual ones, and also their kinship and personhood, inevitably produce *dikgang*. These *dikgang*, I suggest, play an important role in establishing sibling relationships in turn. In the dispute with which I opened this chapter, Modiri had been muttering for some time about his brothers' unwillingness to help him with the cattle, but he was especially fed up with Kagiso. Kagiso worked full-time at a local NGO, and was running three businesses on the side, each of which required a continuous investment of his time and money. But they represented work he was doing for himself, from which only he would benefit (like most young men, he had a significant amount of money to save up if he wanted to marry, much less build – see Chapter Four). He contributed a little here and there at home, but he seldom went out to the cattlepost.

Kagiso was equally fed up with Modiri. Modiri had found and hired a herdsman without consulting his brothers on the costs involved, and without informing them about who he had chosen. Given Kagiso's gradually increasing wealth and social status – he was also becoming a preacher of some repute – he felt entitled to be consulted and taken seriously by his brother, as an equal. At the same time, he was keen to avoid bearing any further responsibility to contribute towards the cattle than he did already, and to protect the solvency of his personal projects. Kagiso's growing sense of independence and success in self-making gave him a certain entitlement to respect and authority – especially given that his elder brother, having not built, nor married, nor had children, may have looked like a stalled person in comparison. No doubt Kagiso's staunch Apostolic leanings partly informed the value he attached to “individual ownership, autonomy, [and] the value of assertiveness” (Klaits 2011: 208). Kagiso's emphasis on the equality of siblings – his insistence that all of his brothers should be present for the discussion, that everyone should bear the responsibilities of care jointly – served this dual purpose of asserting an equality of authority with his brother, while escaping the added responsibility to contribute that such authority and his growing wealth both entailed.

However, his family's dismayed, frustrated response made clear that Kagiso's relative success made him neither equal in authority to his brother, nor able to assert an equality of responsibility with his other siblings. As Mmapula emphasised at the end of their discussion, Kagiso was not simply Modiri's younger brother, but his child – emphasising Kagiso's failures to contribute the right things in the right amount and places, and his unwillingness to recognise this responsibility, as well as Modiri's continuing right to claim his contributions. At the same time, he bore a greater responsibility than his siblings to contribute care, in both resources and work, commensurate with his ability to do so. Some adaptation to his changing circumstances was made, then; but if anything, his success underscored the imperative to contribute more, simply to *retain* his role. The dispute also made clear that contributions within the family were not interchangeable, and specifically that, for a man, bringing home groceries did not suffice in discharging his responsibilities to contribute care.

While Kagiso's threat to take his cattle was an attempt to reject this stubborn re-positioning, in the end it was far more expense and labour than he would be able to bear alone. The weekend after the discussion, he spent two days out at the cattlepost, helping with the work of the herd. The climbdown from his threat highlighted the extent to which his personhood relied on bearing his shifting responsibilities to contribute within the family as much as his success in accumulating resources and relationships outside of it, and on finding balance between them. As much as Kagiso was gradually becoming a person, what *kind* of person he was was far from decided, and depended very much on his continued relationships with kin. At the same time, his about-face demonstrated the extent to which conflict can *avert* schism, rather than simply producing it, thereby making room both for continuity and change in kinship relations.

As the dispute between Modiri and Kagiso suggests, contributions of care around cattle intersect with and rely on other contributions in their turn. And, as that conflict made equally clear, not just anyone can contribute just anything: certain people are required to contribute certain things based on their relative age and gender. Conflicts arising around these expectations work to fix specific responsibilities on specific people, regardless of changes in their circumstances; and, counterintuitively, thereby work to avert major schism, especially between siblings. Below, I explore these themes by turning to the ways these dynamics work out among women relatives around food.

Food

Manaong a ja ka losika.

Vultures eat with their own family members.

I arrived home after dark one evening, and found the *lelwapa* (courtyard) unusually empty. As I switched on the light in my room, a few of the children trickled over from the main house and flopped themselves on the bed.

“*Haish!* We are hungry!” Kenosi offered in a theatrically significant tone. “I like apples,” she added, in case I might have any.

I asked Lesego if anything had been cooked for dinner. At thirteen, Lesego was responsible for much of the preparing and serving of food at home. When her older cousin Tsepho was around, they shared the job; very occasionally, one of the women – Kelebogile, myself, Lorato, or Oratile – took over for the evening. Every once in awhile even Kagiso or Tuelo would whip something up. I had arrived home hungry, hoping I would find my plate served and covered in the kitchen as usually happened if any of us were away at mealtime.

“*Aa-ee!*” she responded, in a sassy, sardonic negative. “I refuse, I’m studying *akere*,” she added. She had notified everyone some weeks previously that her Standard Seven final exams were approaching, and that she would stop cooking so that she could study. It was not unexpected: cooking for between twelve and twenty people was tremendously time-consuming, and Lesego often complained of it. (Learning to type on my laptop, her sister Kenosi had picked out, ‘Lesego cooks too much.’)

I asked Lesego whether there was any food in the house. She shrugged, and so I headed in to the kitchen to check, trailing the children behind me. Food was bought sporadically; more appeared at month end when everyone had been paid, but only the basics were resupplied throughout the month. Usually Kelebogile bore much of the expense on her own. Oratile, her younger sister, would contribute what she could, which was very little considering that half of her salary went to pay transport to and from work. Even Boikanyo would contribute when her children had been staying with us frequently, though she too struggled to make ends meet. I often restocked mid-month. Kagiso would intermittently offer a few hundred Pula (£30-40) to help out, or would bring a few small boxes of vegetables from the small shop he ran. His brothers contributed very little: Modiri would replace tea or sugar when they ran low, and occasionally buy some fatcakes or a few loaves of bread; Tuelo ate at home, but I never saw him contribute for food. Moagi lived away, though his son stayed with

us; he had bought a vehicle for the family and occasionally made similar major contributions, but excused himself from responsibility for the day-to-day running of the household. The upshot was that it was not uncommon to find the cupboards and fridge empty – in which case, dinner was sometimes foregone.

The rest of the children were sprawled out on the cement floor of the sitting room, watching TV, when we piled through to the kitchen. They followed, stretching and asking if we were going to cook. I flipped on the light, and much to my surprise found various boxes and plastic bags on the countertop of the flimsy kitchen cupboard unit that stood by the stove. There were tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, maize meal, eggs, packets of soup mix and seasoning – more than enough for a meal.

“Why has nobody cooked?” I asked. Kelebogile had been home all afternoon; Lorato had been home at least a couple of hours. The men were all home. The children looked at me.

It was already late, so I threw together some eggs and vegetables in an enormous, disintegrating omelette. But the next night, I arrived home to the same situation. The same happened the night after that. Each time, there was food in the house (I supplemented it, just to be sure), and there were people at home who might have cooked; but no dinner was served.

The standoff continued for nearly three weeks. The perishables in the kitchen went off. We all grew hungry, cranky, and suspicious. Whispered recriminations flew thick and fast. Kelebogile was seen stashing half-pints of UHT milk and other food in her room, for the exclusive use of her son Tefo. Oratile arrived home one evening with chicken bologna and miniature yoghurts and asked if she could stash the “food for *my* children”, as she put it, in the small bar fridge in my room, rather than the main fridge in the house. The children settled with tea for breakfast, and whatever was being served at school for lunch. When Tefo flaunted some take-away chicken his mom had brought him one night, he was promptly thumped by his older cousin Kopano (for which only I reprimanded them, unusually). Most nights we would go

until 8 or 9pm having eaten nothing. Eventually Modiri would call one of the children and send them to buy two loaves of bread so that we could at least eat it with tea.

I cooked a few times at the beginning; but because I routinely supplied half of the groceries, I too started refusing to do so. Sometimes I would feed just the children, in my room, from whatever we found in my mini-fridge that didn't need cooking: beans, chakalaka, apples, peanut butter. We would wait until there were only two or three of us home to cook some eggs on the sly; or a few of us would buy something at the shop and drive to eat it somewhere the others wouldn't see us. "*Re ja jaaka magodu*," one of the children observed on such a furtive eating mission: we eat like thieves. It was a sober reminder that our behaviour was profoundly antisocial, and amounted to stealing the food out of one another's mouths.

Like contributions around cattle, the way kin contribute either food or the care-work it requires tells us something about the way different kin roles are demarcated. Thus, the female head of household is the most significant food-provider, responsible for ploughing the fields, raising chicken and goats for slaughter, or buying the bulk of what food needs to be bought. Other adult women in the home bear similar responsibilities, to lesser degrees depending on their respective ability to contribute; adult men may contribute here and there. And the teenaged girls of the family are primarily responsible for the work of cooking and serving.

Much as the brothers shared responsibility to contribute to the care of the herd, then, the sisters shared the responsibility to contribute to the provision of food. And likewise, their respective contributions were individualised according to their roles in the family, and affected them in turn. Thus, Kelebogile, being the eldest woman at home (especially while Mmapula was away at the lands), was primarily responsible for ensuring there was food available and that someone would cook it; and to the extent she was successful in this role, she was respected as the female head of household accordingly. Conversely, to the extent that she disavowed this role – as

during the time of the food feud – she in particular was an object of suspicion and moral disapprobation (which motivated her to withdraw from contributing even further, in a sort of reversal of the contribution cycle we have seen). Oratile, being younger, was responsible in part for providing the food, but in greater part for ensuring it was cooked – which responsibility was borne on her behalf by her eldest daughter. Because of her absence for work and the pittance she earned, Oratile was generally considered well-meaning but still slightly playful in this regard. Lesego, however, was considered responsible and hard-working, having stepped capably into the role left her by her mother.

As with the men and their cattle, generational transition among the women was also marked by their respective contributions of care around food. More than once, I was called by Mmapula in the presence of one of the younger women, and asked whether she should cook if Lorato, or Boipelo, or Tsepho were there. It was a rhetorical question, of course – designed to remind the girls that their contribution was to cook, me that mine was in providing the food and motivating their work, and all of us that the old woman had a claim on our care in return for her efforts in raising us. Much as generational transition was marked among the men in the handover of cattle to boys who had contributed to their care, thereby motivating further contributions and acquisitions, generational transition is marked among women by the gradual acquisition of care responsibilities: daughters take from their mothers first the responsibility to cook, then the responsibility to provide, then the responsibility to oversee both cooking and provision. Like the men, contributions among women siblings served both to unite (sharing responsibilities) and separate (meeting them individually).

Where contributions around food and feeding differ most from contributions around cattle is in the extent to which food differentiates between brothers and sisters, rather than binding them together. Men frequently feed themselves; the pot at the cattlepost is both filled and cooked by them, and they will often buy themselves basic supplies even at home. Modiri was accustomed to buying his own sugar, tea, and bread, as Dipuo was accustomed to buying himself food for the lands (both pointed these facts

out in the course of the cattle discussion). They may share these supplies in times of shortage, as Modiri did above; but this is understood more as a sharing of their own things than a sustained contribution they are obliged to make. Indeed, casting such provisioning as a contribution is inappropriate – as Modiri insisted in Kagiso’s case above. I suggest this differentiation arises because food and feeding is a responsibility primarily borne by the women not simply as women, but as parents of children. When Oratile set out to chastise Tuelo one day for eating vast quantities of food without ever contributing, he replied simply, “I don’t care, I don’t have children, do I?” – indicating the extent to which food contributions index parenthood. In this sense, food does not figure critically in men’s self-making the way it does with women; and it figures with women primarily because it performs and enables the strengthening of their relationships with their children. Contributions, then, may both bind and individuate siblings, but also establish the priority of parent-child relationships over – and, as was hinted above and will be reinforced below, within – sibblingship.

There are important resonances and additions in the *dikgang* that arise out of these tensions, their resolutions, and their effects on roles and relationships, too – as became evident when the food feud was finally mediated. Oratile, Kelebogile, Lorato and I had made the two-hour trip out to visit Mmapula at the family’s second lands, near a village called Musi. We chatted freely enough on the journey, though the tension of the past weeks stayed with us. Mmapula was visibly pleased to see us, having had little company for so long. Eagerly, she suggested we help her with some work in the fields; but no-one jumped at the prospect, and so she gave up. After some chat about the children and others at home, I was surprised when the old woman turned and settled in her chair, and said she’d heard Oratile and Kelebogile were not getting along (*ga ba utlwane* – lit. were not hearing one another). I hadn’t expected an intervention. The sisters straightened and readied themselves, however, as if they had come expressly for this purpose.

Each sister set out to give a measured account of what had been happening at home, but emotions quickly ran high. Oratile complained of her sister’s harsh treatment of

Oratile's two girls, Lesego and Kenosi, and the nasty comments Kelebogile was prone to making about their laziness or uselessness, or about their mother's failure to look after them properly and the unwanted burden it placed on her. For her part, Kelebogile complained of Oratile's scant contributions to the household though she was working, and then turned on their mother as well:

"It started with you in 2009. If she can't contribute she tells you. But it's me looking after the household. Why can't she tell me?" Kelebogile spoke rapidly and with great annoyance, gesturing first at her mother and then at her sister, who was on the verge of tears.

The mutual recrimination continued for some time. Mmapula mused on both of her girls' behaviour stretching back to childhood, with varying degrees of apparent relevance for the disagreement at hand. "Kelebogile, you like things (*o rata dilo*) too much. These are things of Satan," she added, referencing their shared faith. "Oratile, you are too sensitive and cry too quickly, you need to stick up for yourself." Quite suddenly, she leaned towards me and asked me what I thought should be done. I was at a loss.

"I don't know," I responded with perplexity. "Maybe we should figure out how much money we spend on food every month, and then everybody should contribute equally?" It was a naive suggestion, but I knew the brothers were making decent money and were in the best position to help out.

Oratile crossed her arms and looked away wistfully. "We can't ask Modiri, he looks after the cattle," Kelebogile asserted. It was hard to argue the point: he spent a small fortune on the cattle, and it was already subject to running dispute. "What about the others?" I rejoined. They helped out occasionally with the cattle, but it was hardly an expense to them; and either they or their children ate at home. An expression of resignation passed across all three women's faces. There was an extended silence.

Mmapula sighed. “Kelebogile,” she began, “Oratile is your younger sister, her children are your children.” Kelebogile crossed her arms and looked sullen. Oratile’s children recognised her in title as *nkuku* – the same title they used for their grandmother. Both Kelebogile and Mmapula bore the responsibility of caring for the girls when Oratile was staying elsewhere for work; though Lesego – the eldest – did a lot of the actual work of looking after her little sister.

“You see what I’m saying. You’re not children, you look after children,” the old woman asserted. “I don’t like too much discussion (*puo*),” she added, sitting up and putting her hands on her knees to end the conversation.

In the end, nothing changed. Kelebogile talked to me once or twice about trying to budget out our grocery expenses and asking her mother to speak to the men in the household about it; but we never did. Perhaps we both suspected that either the old woman would refuse to make the request of her sons, or that they would refuse or be unable to respect it, which would only cause further bitterness. It was only after Lesego had finished her exams and begun cooking again that our dinners resumed.

Here, the fluidity and multiplicity of generational roles emerges in the context of dispute among the women much as it did among the men. The ways in which the ethic of contribution promotes egalitarianism become even more apparent in the conflation of mothers and daughters; Kelebogile reproaches Oratile’s children for their mother’s failures to contribute, and holds Oratile responsible for Lesego’s refusal to cook as significant of Oratile’s own refusal to contribute. And, as in Kagiso’s case, Kelebogile uses this ethic of egalitarianism to try to limit the already-onerous responsibilities placed on her. But in the end, as her mother makes clear, Kelebogile’s seniority makes her the girls’ parent (and, given their identification of her with their grandmother, also Oratile’s parent); and so her responsibilities to contribute are greater. (Unlike Modiri, Kelebogile’s claim over her sister’s contributions is not reinforced by this hierarchisation; but I suggest that this difference arises only because Oratile had very little to contribute, unlike Kagiso.) As the silent dismissal of my naive suggestion indicated, much as siblings are equals, an

insistent egalitarianism can undermine claims on their contributions; and so the hierarchical differences of their responsibilities, usually framed in parent-child terms, is stressed.

Finally, the sharpness of gender distinctions in responsibilities to contribute becomes especially clear in the above vignette. No matter how much the women are struggling to generate contributions sufficient to feed the family, men will not be called upon; just as no matter how expensive the cattle prove to be, the women will not be asked to contribute to their ongoing care. Curiously, however, the men are carefully excluded from *dikgang* over food among the women, though the women were necessary players – if primarily as witnesses – in the *dikgang* over the cattle. Framed differently, women contribute to the negotiation of *dikgang* among men about cattle, whereas men do not contribute to the negotiation of *dikgang* among women about food. Remembering that women are major potential contributors of cattle through their marriages, whereas men's contributions to the family's food and feeding carry no particular weight, this dynamic begins to make more sense. The gendered ways in which siblings are engaged in *dikgang* mirror the contributions they do and are expected to make. This mirroring underlines the importance of *dikgang* in presenting microcosms of the contributory process, which allow it to be adapted to individuals' changing circumstances while reasserting a continuity in their complex relationships to one another.

Food, then, has an important role to play in Tswana kinship; but not simply in its provision, nor its preparation, nor its shared consumption. Family emerges from the shared but differential responsibility people bear for each of these aspects, and from their ongoing willingness to contribute; and produces specific gender and generational roles and relationships in turn. And this system of contribution is highly precarious, easily disrupted, and an ongoing source of *dikgang*. The comparison of a family to vultures eating together, as in the proverb that prefaced this section, is somehow apt: scavenging, independent birds that eat the kills of other animals, vultures may provide for one another, but perhaps only unreliably, and with frequent scuffles around the carcass.

This section has demonstrated that responsibilities to contribute care – and the conflicts they produce – define roles and relationships within family, both across and between generations, and also define generations themselves. On the one hand, siblings are ideally bound together as a cooperative group that shares those responsibilities, each contributing in accordance with their role and capacity to do so, and relying on the contributions of others in kind. On the other, they are sharply separated by birth order, generally in the idiom of parent-child relationships. Greater responsibilities of care are borne by older siblings for their younger siblings and those siblings' children; and their success or failure in meeting those expectations of care confers or withholds the seniority of parenthood in turn. In this sense, siblings' generational positions become multiple; they are potentially of the same and of different generations as one another, as their parents' generation, or as their nieces' and nephews' generation, depending on the order of their birth and the responsibilities in question. And this multiplicity echoes and perhaps grounds many others, emphasising the way in which persons are inevitably children as well as parents, or in which one person may have three mothers or children in other families, depending on the contributions of care they have made. At the same time, in all this multiplicity, it becomes clear that the critical relationship in terms of which kinship and care is understood is that of parent to child, such that siblingship is encompassed by parenthood. Contrary to what has been argued elsewhere, I suggest that the encompassing parent-child relationship described in these exchanges is cast in cognatic, and not simply agnatic, terms (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 137).

The proverbs with which this section began neatly summarise these conclusions. Siblings share responsibilities to acquire and contribute; they hold and consume things jointly; they feast or suffer together. But the expectations attendant on this dictum are frequently disappointed as each sibling, brother and sister alike, bears them differentially and must meet them individually – while balancing them with attempts to establish a self, life, household and family of his or her own. Ideally they are equal, united and together; but at the same time they, like their things, are ranked

and separable. And yet, their self-making, and the *dikgang* that ensue, provide important possibilities for each to access independence through one another – binding them together even as they individuate themselves. The second proverb nods to this paradox, taking as given that siblings are frequently in conflict, and implicitly condoning it as a necessary dimension of binding ‘children of one womb’ together as kin and as persons.

While demonstrating the ways that things produce kin, the examples discussed above also demonstrate a concomitant dynamic. Things are held together, but owned separately; they are consumed together, but contributed separately. And as a result the work of care they require is cast simultaneously as a shared undertaking (“we were working as one”) and an individual responsibility (“if you own something that needs care, you must take responsibility”). And this tension can be traced to a deep duality in the things of care and the care of things: they produce *both* kinship and personhood. With the women stashing food for their children, and the men purchasing and expending cattle independently, it becomes clear that the very things that produce family are also called upon in achieving personhood – a question to which I turn next.

Taking What Belongs to You: Self-Making

Dilo makwati di kwatabolotswa mo go ba bangwe.
Things are like bark, they are stripped off from others.

I am a man: Tuelo’s outburst

I awoke suddenly to the sound of Lesego screaming.

At first I imagined that she was laughing while getting ready for school. But then I recognised a note of panic, and the fact she was calling her uncle, and finally the fact that it was pitch dark still. I was out into the *lelwapa* even before I was entirely

awake, and somehow everyone else was also there already, in shorts and nightshirts and hastily grabbed blankets. It was four in the morning.

The first thing that came into focus was Tuelo striding across the *lelwapa* away from the house, dressed in his bright blue worksuit and scowling furiously. The next was the sight of him picking up a loose brick and hurling it back at the house with ruthless accuracy, smashing the sitting room window.

From the doorway, Modiri, the eldest, was yelling insults. Oratile was holding him there and trying to calm him down. Tuelo strode back and forth at the edge of the *lelwapa*, yelling “*Ga ke tshabe ope!!*” – I am not afraid of anyone (also, as I was told later, “I respect no-one” – a statement of profound filial contempt). Kelebogile said something under her breath about the cars, near which Tuelo was prowling as if looking for more missiles.

Tuelo moved threateningly back towards the house, and suddenly Kagiso came out to intercept him. Kagiso was scrawny in his boxer shorts but somehow more imposing than usual. He caught Tuelo by his collar with a straight, firm arm, and started slapping him on the side of his head. “Who do you think you are?!” he yelled repeatedly, clobbering Tuelo each time; “Do you know who I am?!” I had never seen so much as a violent gesture from Kagiso before – the cheery, implacable evangelist of the family. In the grip of his older brother, Tuelo had begun to cower, pulling his arms up near his head and trying to duck the blows. “It’s him!! He was beating me! Look what he did to my head!” he began to bleat, blaming Modiri for having provoked the incident.

Kagiso wrestled Tuelo back into the house, the latter shouting about a long string of injustices he had suffered at the hands of his brothers: being denied access to their cars, being made to work without pay, having his cattle taken from him unfairly. He vowed to set up his own cattlepost and build his own house – insisting, “*Nna ke monna!/?*” (I am a man) – as Kagiso wrestled him to his bed. When the complaints began to repeat themselves, Kagiso instructed him simply, “*Robala! Robala, monna*”

(Sleep! Sleep, man). Tuelo refused; but Kagiso held him in place, until his diatribe gradually began to fade.

Most of the women from the yard across the road had arrived in the *lelwapa*, wrapped in their blankets. They began telling us about Tuelo's comings and goings: they had seen him leave with the vehicle late the night before, blind drunk, insulting people as he went. When he finally returned, Modiri had asked where he had been; Tuelo had refused to tell him and insulted him for asking. We all shook our heads at the familiar patterns of Tuelo's drunkenness and violence, though much of the remonstrating focused on his stupidity: why had he stayed out so late with the truck, knowing that Modiri would have to use it to go to the cattlepost early in the morning? Why not bring it back earlier? There had been a clear way to avoid the incident; and Tuelo – because he is stubborn, and “doesn't listen” (*ga o utlwe*), they suggested – had provoked it.

It was neither the first nor the last time that Tuelo created such a scene, though it was one of the worst. Generally the incidents revolved around a borrowed car, alcohol, and month's end – when everyone had been paid, and young men in particular were moving through the proceeds of their labour at lightning speed. Indeed, month's end was a rare opportunity for young men to extend the influence of their extra-familial relationships, and they took to it with something like mad panic: buying phone units or gifts for prospective girlfriends, treating friends to drinks or helping them with loans (Durham 2006; Gulbrandsen 1986: 15; Suggs 2002). As our builder and neighbour Rra Ditau noted, “Tuelo only cares about friends and women right now.” Often enough, the incidents he provoked involved theft of any cash in the house. Indeed, the very next morning – once his brothers were gone, and as the rest of us prepared to attend the big event to welcome back the *mophato* (initiation group) – Tuelo aggressively threatened his mother until she handed over money she was holding for him, and took some of hers as well.

Kgang ya Tuelo, ‘Tuelo's issue’, was addressed a couple of mornings later in a formal gathering of the siblings called by Dipuo. Modiri was away at the cattlepost,

and Kelebogile refused to come; but the rest of us perched awkwardly on the living room furniture, trying to avoid the seat in which shards of broken glass and a brick still lay. Tuelo was seated across from his father, scowling. The tale of the explosive night was first summarised by Dipuo, then re-told at his invitation by Mmapula and Kagiso (the rest of us declined, though we were also invited to give our accounts). Several times Tuelo tried to interject, revisiting his complaints from the same night, only to be silenced by his father.

Satisfied with our collective narrative of the event, Dipuo launched into his judgment. He dwelt mostly on the inappropriateness of insulting one's eldest brother, tantamount to insulting the old man himself. Mid-speech, Tuelo, becoming furious, stood up and stormed out. No-one stopped him. The old man wondered aloud, primarily to his wife, what they could do with someone so stubborn, who had no respect. After a pause, he concluded: "*Re tla bitsa bo malome*," we'll call the uncles. No mention was made of the broken window, the car, the alcohol, the cattle, or any of the other things the original dispute had seemed to be about. We disbanded.

The uncles were called, but they never came. Their having been called hung like an ominous cloud over Tuelo awhile, but as the weeks passed and the meeting did not happen, the threat dissipated. He calmed, was more conscientiously helpful at home, and he began working for Kagiso in his shop.

Tuelo, I suggest, ran afoul of his family by trying to assert himself as a man through his brothers' things. Kagiso's repeated question of who he thought he was, drawn into comparison with who Kagiso was, made this painfully clear: Tuelo was not a man, he was a younger brother, and in this sense a child. He relied on his older brothers to borrow vehicles, for piece jobs to earn some cash, and even for their hand-me-down clothes. As such, the things Tuelo relied upon to assert his independence were often not, in fact, his; and his limited access to them made it difficult for him to extend them to others as objects of care, and thereby form relationships through them. At the same time, he frequently failed to undertake the work of care these things (or other things for which he bore responsibility) required.

He had passable basic knowledge of car mechanics, but couldn't pay for or fix the more complex problems that arose constantly; he refused to undertake the yardwork he was expected to do without payment; and he had even managed to lose much of the family herd at one point – recovering most, but not all of the cattle. These failures in care-work further disrupted his claim on his brother's things, and indeed on any things of his own. They also meant Tuelo was unable to effect the transformation of work and things into care, leaving them stuck in the short-term, acquisitional realm, and frustrating his ability to build relationships and assert personhood through them.

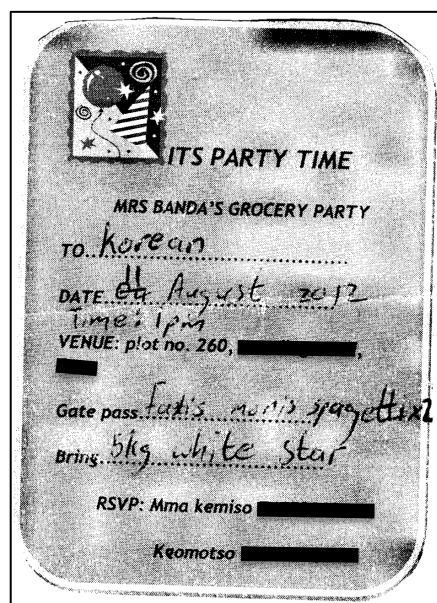
Tuelo's example demonstrates the extent to which the acquisition of things is necessary, but not sufficient for asserting personhood – especially when they are simply taken or borrowed from others. Neither a gift nor a contribution can meaningfully be made from a theft or a loan. Indeed, part of what makes a gift of cash or clothes meaningful is that it comes from a limited resource that should or could have been contributed elsewhere. In this sense, Tswana personhood is not simply centrifugal, constantly pulling away from kinship, but relies on the context of kinship for its validation and meaning.

That volatile morning, Tuelo lashed out against the constraints that his own lack of things placed on his self-making. In some ways, he was trying to make a break (and he succeeded, with the window at least, which went unmended for months). But drawing his family into overt conflict also had the opposite effect: it reasserted both their responsibility for him and his dependence on them, especially as concerned his brothers. It was partly through engaging this responsibility, I suggest, that he was able to acquire paid work from Kagiso, and was not asked to fix the window or make good on the money he had stolen. The fact that the incident was never entirely resolved also effectively acknowledged and left room for Tuelo's claims to independence. More than simply allowing kinship to reassert itself, then, *dikgang* also allow family to adapt to and enable the changing circumstances, growth, and gradual independence of its members.

Women's things: *Motshelo*

“*Owai!*” Boikanyo exclaimed with annoyance, hurrying past me to check the meat on the grill. “They haven’t brought food, they haven’t brought money,” she added, shaking her head.

It was a Sunday afternoon, the day of Boikanyo’s grocery party. Her *motshelo* group – a small-scale savings concern in which she participated with five other women, including her sister Kelebogile – met for such events monthly, its members taking turns to host. They almost always met on Sunday afternoons, at the beginning of the month: by then everyone had been paid, but other standing debts had not yet finished off the money; clashes with Saturday weddings and funerals were avoided; and by afternoon, all the housework and laundry had been finished, and the women were free to visit one another’s yards.



Motshelo invitation.

I didn’t remember grocery parties from my previous time in the village, but they had become something of a fixture in the interim. The women at home seemed to be attending someone’s grocery party every other week. The events perplexed me, even after I’d joined Boikanyo’s and Kelebogile’s *motshelo* myself. Every month, one member of the *motshelo* would send out invitations to the others, and to friends and neighbours associated with other *metshelo* as well. For core members of the *motshelo*, the invitation would specify an item or items of food of a previously-agreed value – in Boikanyo’s case, P125 (roughly £10), which was enough for a sizable sack of rice, maize meal, or flour, or a few bottles of cooking oil. Thus, every month each member would spend P125 to supply someone else with food; but then one month, she would receive P725 (£50) worth of food in return. Additional invitees would be assigned a smaller item of food to bring, or a comparable amount

of money, as a 'gate pass'. And then one might be expected to be invited to their future grocery parties, and to contribute something of comparable value.

What perplexed me was that, as they were attending an event, people who attended grocery parties expected to be fed – and fed well. We had spent much of the previous day sourcing meat, vegetables, drink and sweets to serve the *motshelo* members. Boikanyo had had to bear significant cost for these foodstuffs up front – borrowing from the rest of us at home to cover the cost.

“What if the amount of food Boikanyo gets is less than how much she spent?” I asked Lorato, who was helping me run errands on Boikanyo’s behalf. “What if people to whom she’s contributed don’t contribute back?” With six children and a grandchild at home, Boikanyo struggled to make ends meet at the best of times.

“*Gareitse*,” Lorato answered, non-committally: we don’t know. “We prefer to save our money in people,” she added.

As we helped Boikanyo finish grilling the meat and preparing the meal, the *motshelo* members chatted behind the house in the spreading shade of an enormous acacia. A long table stood at the head of the impromptu ceremony, covered in a white table cloth. My bright blue tarpaulin was laid on the ground in front of the table, folded neatly, with all of the contributed foodstuffs arrayed upon it. It didn’t seem like such a bad haul: there was maize meal and macaroni, sugar and flour, oil and condiments. To the right of the table, perpendicular to it, the *motshelo* members sat in several chairs ranged in two lines (themselves the products of another *motshelo* in which Kelebogile participated). Kelebogile had carefully registered everything in a ruled exercise book, alongside the name of the contributor; and they had just finished reciting every contribution, ululating and applauding each contributor as they went.

Neighbours and other invited guests who were not members of the *motshelo* trickled into the yard over the rest of the afternoon, helping themselves to meat and salads, many without having brought a thing to contribute. Standing by the grill, we made

rough calculations and figured Boikanyo was probably running a loss. At this her daughter Boipelo – with her own infant child on her hip – became thoroughly annoyed. “What’s the point of *motshelo* if it costs you more money than you get? Why not just use your own money to buy your own food?”

Not all *motshelo* groups ran such events. Indeed, once everyone in Boikanyo’s *motshelo* group had had their own grocery party, the decision was made to simplify things. After I joined, we would simply meet in the yard of that month’s host for a drink and some simple snacks, to ensure all payments had been made, collected, tabulated, and appreciated. Where there had been covered tables, ceremony and ululations, now there were chairs pulled into a circle in the *lelwapa* and informal chat (often about the *motshelo* itself). Kelebogile even hosted the group in her pink polkadotted pyjamas, a toque thrown absent-mindedly over her uncoiffed hair.

Not all *metshelo* focused on food, either. Kelebogile and her mother belonged to a *motshelo* in which each member bought four chairs for the main recipient each month. *Metshelo* were organised for dishes, cookware, furniture, even building supplies. Occasionally recipients simply pooled money; in the *motshelo* I joined, we each simply contributed P150 (£12) to the main recipient each month. Often they were set up on a savings-and-loan basis: each member would contribute a certain amount up front, from which pool loans would be offered either to other *motshelo* members or to friends, neighbours and family (usually at steep interest rates, from 10-30%). The interest would then be divided equally. Savings-and-loan *metshelo* were often kept close: Kelebogile, Oratile, Lorato and Boikanyo ran one for a while, as did another friend of mine in concert with her siblings.

Above all, *metshelo* were women’s initiatives. While men might, in principle, have a *motshelo* of their own, they were rare. Conversely, every woman in the yard with access to even small amounts of money belonged to at least one *motshelo*, and often several (Kelebogile belonged to eight at one point, the combined expense of her contributions to which was baffling). Most *metshelo* comprised a cross-section of women linked through family, neighbourhood, work, or friendship; and they were

often inter-generational, though many preferred to join with *bagolo* (elders) over *banyana* (girls). Many also nominally included members' children, whose contributions were supplied by their mothers (suggestive of generation-collapsing like the one we saw in the 'Food' section above). And they were as common in the city as the village: social workers I knew ran them together, and the young professional women running one major NGO in town had tables recording who was due to pay what to whom tacked to the walls behind their desks.

On the whole, the things women bought with *motshelo* money or organised *metshelo* to acquire were seldom small-scale personal items like clothes, shoes, or toiletries: they were usually major household purchases. Attempting to illustrate to me the value of *metshelo*, Kelebogile noted she had acquired the sitting room furniture, her wardrobe, sixteen matching chairs, a set of good dishes, large enamel cookware, and various other items useful at home and for hosting parties. *Metshelo*, she explained, "help to buy household goods, the things that are needed." That said, *motshelo* proceeds are meant to be strategic, and to answer to participating women's sense of what was most needed at home. In doing so, *metshelo* grant women considerable autonomy – and also begin to establish their capacity to provision and manage a household, an important dimension of achieving personhood for women (Suggs 2002). Indeed, as we have seen above, the fact that the objects acquired through *metshelo* are household goods does not mean they are necessarily for a woman's natal home; as often as not, they are large-scale purchases the woman may claim should she establish a home of her own, whether through building or marriage.

Metshelo struck me as a decidedly short-term, fluid and transient means of organising exchange. Most groups lasted through one cycle of contributions, or perhaps two – which, depending on the number of members, might last anywhere from a few months to a year. Then they disbanded or were reorganised. (Perhaps the only exception to this rule was with loan-making schemes; we'll return to the significance of this exception below.) Given that women participated in so many, and had to be somewhat strategic in which ones they joined – finding others who had similar needs, whether for groceries or chairs, at similar times, and making room for

these needs to change – this brevity and flexibility was crucial. At the same time, the dynamic of contribution upon which *metshelo* relied did have the transformative effect we have seen elsewhere, turning the goods or money circulated into objects with long-term effects on the sustenance of existing households or the creation of personhood and new households. The resources acquired through *metshelo* also could, and usually would, be contributed onwards, thereby engaging them in the cycles of contribution discussed above.

And yet, *metshelo* did *not* create kinship. Indeed, even the degree to which they created community among women, in the sense of lasting ties of mutual involvement, was highly attenuated and relied generally on pre-existing connections (in contrast to the community-building dynamics of the Malaysian *kut*, for example; Carsten 1989: 132-33). The fact that *metshelo* lasted for a comparatively brief time, and that women were so often involved in so many – including ones that had virtually no interaction with each other, as among work colleagues in the city versus one's neighbours in one's home village – made them ineffective in terms of creating community. I suggest that this limitation arises first because *metshelo* contributions are not contributions of care; they are contributions of things, in large part disentangled from the work of care they require. Secondly, *metshelo* contributions are seldom pooled together, nor used nor looked after together. They are given into the ownership of one person and generally are used or consumed separately, and therefore cannot bind *metshelo* members together collectively. In this sense, they behave more like gifts than contributions. This clear separation, of course, also minimises *dikgang* (fittingly, the term 'to separate' used in this instance, *kgaoganya*, also means 'to mediate'). While treasurers may cheat, or members default, offenders are either privately approached, excluded, or the *metshelo* itself is simply left to lapse. In worst-case scenarios the *kgotla* (traditional court) may be involved, but this eventuality is rare. As much as we have seen conflict to be productive of kinship elsewhere, here its total absence indexes a lack of kinship in turn. Tellingly, the riskiest of *metshelo* projects – loan-making – is frequently only undertaken by siblings, who are already bound by a strict ethic of contribution and have recourse outside the *metshelo* to means of joint conflict mediation.

Rather than establishing community among women or alternatives to kinship, I suggest *metshelo* contributions have another, equally critical effect: they render accumulation for oneself moral, and secure that accumulation from the expectations of additional contribution to one's natal home. If one were contributing to eight *metshelo* every month, the resources promised to those groups were as good as spent and could not be claimed elsewhere. Indeed, I could not understand how Kelebogile managed to sustain eight *metshelo* until I saw that they acted like a sort of tax-free savings account, an investment that sheltered a substantial portion of her available resources from the expectations of her family. I do not mean to say she wasn't contributing to the family out of the proceeds of her *metshelo*; of course she was. But so long as she was involved in these groups, expectations that she should contribute *more* at home – like those levelled at Kagiso – were non-existent. This sheltering, I suggest, is made possible because those resources are already being contributed, and in a way that will ultimately benefit the household. Even if some of the things one acquired through *metshelo* were individually owned, or intended for personal use either immediately or in the future – like Kelebogile's wardrobe or bedroom set – they were among other things available for household use, and were themselves things that could be cast as being contributions to the household. And in this sense, one's accumulation of them was scarcely noticed, and anyway irreproachable.

At the same time, Boikanyo's frustration above demonstrates the difficulties of striking the right balance among contributions. One must be seen to contribute enough at home, but it is equally important not to contribute too much elsewhere; and in both cases, it is critical to keep one's contributions in proportion with the contributions being made by others. A similar imperative was at work in the dispute between Kagiso and Modiri above. But in the context of *metshelo* – where grudges and outright conflict are inappropriate, and where recourse is limited – it is one's own projects of self-making that suffer should that balance be upset. Over-contributing attracts no moral approbation. The balance between what is contributed and what is kept – between saving in others and giving to others, which *metshelo* enables to some extent – requires substantial practice and fine-tuning.

Being able to found a family and household – a *lelwapa* – of one's own is, as we saw in Chapter One, a critical means of acquiring personhood. But the things through which Batswana establish personhood, and families of their own, are subject to pre-existing claims from their natal households – which also figure powerfully in individuals' ability to acquire those things in the first place. Stocking things for oneself runs the risk of doing so at the expense of one's natal family, and puts the family as a whole at risk of insolvency and conflict. Contributing everything to one's natal family puts one's achievement of personhood at risk, in part by sharply constraining one's ability to found relationships and a *lelwapa* of one's own. Much as the building of Lorato's house required her to find a balance between being away and being at home – a balance she was ultimately unable to strike (Chapter One) – the acquisition and management of things like food, cattle, cash or cars requires constant balancing work between having and contributing; and the difficulties of that balancing work produce *dikgang* that families are constantly called upon to address, in ways that assert the family's stability while making room for its children to achieve independence.

Whether in friendships and relationships, *metshelo* or paid work, associations that stand beyond and between families bear important implications for the acquisition of critical things, the exercise of care, and therefore the negotiation of both personhood and kinship. As we have seen, in the context of AIDS, such extra-familial agencies have proliferated – from home-based care projects to burial societies, associations for people living with HIV to orphan care projects, as well as government social work and public health programmes. Framing the pandemic primarily as a 'crisis of care', their major concern has been with the provision of some of the very things discussed above. I turn next to a consideration of the sorts of care NGOs and government agencies intervening in response to AIDS provide, and suggest that they either involve a disentanglement of care-things from care-work, or a specifically non-contributory form of care. The effects of these dissociations disrupt kinship practice without enabling personhood, thereby provoking crises in some ways worse than those they aim to address.

Intervening Care

Pono came struggling up the dusty road towards me, pushing a heavily-wobbling wheelbarrow piled high with sacks of maize meal, sugar, and vegetables, with odd toiletries tucked in around the edges. I hollered to catch her attention, and she looked up, throwing me a cheeky grin. Shortly she pulled up in front of me to rest. “I’m from the shop,” she supplied, breathlessly, omitting the other obvious detail: she had been sent to take her food basket.

I’d known Pono since she was six years old, when I’d met her at the orphan care centre. We were neighbours; she was Mpho’s eldest grandchild (see Chapter One), and she and her little sister visited the yard frequently. Now in her early teens, slight, bright, and volatile, she had a mischievous sense of humour and was wise beyond her years. I turned to accompany her home.

“Where’s the old woman?” I asked, partly to hear how Pono’s grandmother Mpho was doing and partly hoping to avoid meeting her. Since before Pono’s mother’s death, Mpho had been somewhat infamous in the neighbourhood, and in my company she was prone to diatribes and discomfiting requests for money. “*Akere* she’s at the shebeen,” Pono answered, without missing a beat. Her grandmother was frequently drunk, and often left the children locked out of the run-down one-room brick house in which they lived while she was off drinking. The grandmother did not work, and only infrequently ploughed; she seemed not to have any other children, and so the household subsisted primarily on intermittent contributions from Pono’s older sister, occasional gifts of food and clothes bestowed via the NGO, and the food basket Pono and her little sister received monthly from the government as registered orphans. Pono and her little sister were often left to cook for themselves, wash their school uniforms and otherwise look after the house and yard, even when I first knew them – which meant that many of those chores either didn’t get done, or were done haphazardly. At the NGO we had been tasked occasionally with marching the girls in for a shower, or having them wash their uniforms on the spot; and, like the other children, they ate lunch and an early supper there. For a time I’d even been asked to

administer and monitor a prescription for Pono, since her grandmother was apt to forget. Pono was headstrong, quick to talk back, and acutely aware that she was the primary conduit for many of her family's resources.

"My older sister has moved," Pono noted as we rolled into her grandmother's unfenced, rocky yard, thankfully empty. She fetched me a ramshackle chair. "She's saying she wants to take me and my other sister to stay with her." The older sister was only in the next village over, but it was still some distance away. By then the woman had two children of her own, and neither she nor her boyfriend had regular employment. They were staying with the girls' father's father, who was losing his sight. I asked Pono what she thought of the idea. "*Gakeitse*," she shrugged – I don't know. "This old woman is saying my sister only wants the food basket. And she's asking, what is she going to eat if we go?"

Tumelo, the social worker, seemed to share the old woman's skepticism. Pono described joint visits to Tumelo's office with her older sister and grandmother, and their fruitless attempts to negotiate a transfer of the girls' registration and food basket from Dithaba to her sister's new place. Her sister would produce a litany of examples demonstrating her grandmother's neglectful behaviour; her grandmother would answer with a litany of examples demonstrating the sister's greed and filial irresponsibility. From what I knew, both were probably accurate. Tumelo had asked Pono and her sister what they would prefer, but they had remained silent. "What could I say?" she asked me, rhetorically; we both knew one situation could be as bad as the other, and that taking sides could provoke uncertain consequences.

I heard a few weeks later that Pono's sister had eventually just taken the two girls to stay with her, hoping that the transfer of the food basket would be hastened when the social workers realised the change in residence was already *fait accompli*. It was a misjudgment. The social workers refused, taking the incident as proof positive that the older sister was only after the girls' food basket, and therefore did not have the girls' best interests at heart. The girls remained registered in Dithaba at the same shop; though in their absence, their grandmother could not fetch the monthly ration

from the other side of the village, and so it went uncollected. It marked a major falling-out between Pono's elder sister and their grandmother, after which they refused to speak to one another, though the girls were allowed to visit the old woman from time to time.

The Department of Social Services introduced the food basket as their central response to the 'orphan crisis' in 1999, under the Short Term Plan of Action on the Care of Orphans (STPA, RoB 1999). Much to the chagrin of social work practitioners and policy-makers alike, the STPA was still the primary policy guide for the orphan care programme in 2012. The food basket in particular had been a source of endless consternation. The STPA explicitly framed it as a contribution to the entire family, to assist them in managing the additional burden of caring for an orphaned child in the absence of contributions that child's parent would have made. As such, it provided an ample amount of food – much more than a single person could eat in a month, and certainly more than many of the adults in my home managed to contribute. Nutritionists had been involved in identifying a healthy range of foodstuffs. And yet the stories of ways it had gone wrong were legion: grandmothers resold the staples in their tuckshops; aunts fed their own children and let their orphaned nieces and nephews go without; orphaned children commandeered the baskets and refused to share with anyone else in the household, cooking for themselves and insulting their grandparents. Indeed, tales of food basket abuse by neglectful, selfish relatives or poorly socialised orphans was a sort of shorthand for the irreparable collapse of the Tswana family.

Perhaps partly because of these narratives, almost all of the NGOs that I knew of provided feeding programmes of some kind. In many cases, that was all they provided. Whether a lack of food was ever a serious issue for the orphans served by these projects was never fully established. Given that the children were fed at school as well as through the government's problematic food baskets, it seemed unlikely. As a Motswana colleague who worked for the American Embassy observed wryly one

day: “Botswana must have the fattest orphans in the world” (compare similar commentary in Dahl 2014).

Food is not the only thing with which government and NGOs responding to the AIDS epidemic in Botswana provided their clients – though it was far and away the most common. Clothes – donated outfits from NGOs, school uniforms from social workers – were also usual, as was cash support for school fees and transport. Household necessities like blankets and mattresses were also frequent. What is striking is that all of these things are the very objects that figure so strongly in the kin dynamics explored above. Their relative priority in families is largely mirrored. Indeed, one NGO recently claims to have gone so far as to provide cattle so that unmarried parents might wed, rendering their children legitimate heirs (though this is an exceptional example; see Chapter Three).

To the extent that AIDS has been framed as a crisis of care – with more people (the ill, dying, and orphaned) needing care, and fewer people to provide it – this parallel is no surprise. Food *is* care, as are clothes and household goods; and both agencies are attempting to make supplemental contributions where they believe those of others have been lost. This gesture seems to present a ‘way in’ to the family, creating a pseudo-kin role for the agency by dint of its contribution. The common habit of referring to orphaned children as *bana ba bommaboipelego*, children of the social workers, or *bana ba diNGO*, children of the NGOs – much like calling the calf Modiri’s child – seems to recognise the contribution made in terms of the relationship central to Tswana kinship. But the oftentimes ironic undertone of these expressions is equally telling. Much as they may provide food to the family, social workers don’t undertake the cooking, or any of the other work of care that raising children or being family requires; nor do they undertake the work of producing the food itself. The same follows for NGO donations to the home. The child recipients, in turn, are either unable to do the work that these things require, or must do it for others who have not necessarily contributed towards it. That is to say, food baskets and NGO donations are awkwardly estranged from the work of producing, acquiring, managing and contributing that transforms them into expressions of care. Given that

the phrases noted are often deployed when children are conducting themselves inappropriately at home, they serve more to signify the children's growing distance from the family than the social worker's or NGO's inclusion. Neither social worker nor NGO ever becomes *rragwe* or *mmagwe*, father or mother, of a given child. Their 'contributions', in other words, only partially live up to their billing, and do not serve to insert them in kin relationships in the way contributions of care ordinarily would. Instead, their 'contributions' behave like poisonous gifts, which cannot be reciprocated and threaten relationships accordingly (compare Parry 1989). In other words, they are not generative – neither of future, additional contributions of care, nor of kin relationships as such.

This partialness leaves the source of the care-thing open to reinterpretation, and the process of transforming it into a contribution left to be done. Government policy positions the food basket as a sort of replacement for a dead parent's contributions, for the use of the whole family (RoB 1999). But in the absence both of the dead parent and the contributing agency in the home, it remains in need of a contributor to transform it; and is open to claims – as a contribution – especially by those who cannot otherwise contribute to the extent expected of them. In this sense, it offers family members a potential means of asserting a new role for themselves, and a new degree of personhood, in the context of their families. Thus, Pono, her elder sister, and her grandmother all asserted some claim on the girls' food basket – not simply for their own use, but as an object that their other care-work validated as a contribution to the family and therefore an expression of care. Unfortunately, the extent to which the food basket is delinked from work makes these claims on it highly indeterminate and open to contestation. And these claims are seldom easy to establish, particularly when the arbiters of such claims – the social workers – stand outside the relationships of home. Perhaps more importantly, they are claims to personhood made *at the expense of* someone else's claims, or in competition with them. In this sense, food baskets and donations both disrupt kin patterns of contribution, and frustrate attempts at self-making within the context of kinship. Children's claims to food baskets, in this context, become a sort of precocious claim to personhood and a more significant role in the family (or even a political claim, as

suggested by Dahl 2009a: Chapter Five) – a claim that speeds them up or knocks them out of time, much as Lorato’s building project did in Chapter One. And the contributions themselves take on traits of short-term, self-terminating exchange rather than the longer-term, self-reproducing cycle we have seen above. In the worst-case scenario, like the soil-eating children of the Amazon (Gow 1989), Tswana orphans are enabled to provide for and look after themselves – cutting them off from the relationships of care that constitute and sustain family, and thereby truncating kinship. However, to the extent their newly acquired resources cannot easily be contributed or gifted elsewhere – much as in Tuelo’s case – they do not serve to build the extra-familial relationships that might constitute self-making, leaving personhood increasingly out of reach.

Of course, there are important ways in which NGO actors especially *do* undertake the work of care associated with the things they give. As we saw in Pono’s case, staff or volunteers at the the NGO cook the food they provide, wash the uniforms provided by social workers, and help administer the medicines they source. While this approach preserves a Tswana understanding of care, it is distinctly non-contributory as concerns the family. Care is provided within the confines of the NGO, exclusively to the registered client, outwith the context of family. Between them, NGO staff, child clients, volunteers and others might be thought to be contributing collectively; but to the extent these ‘contributions’ are either professionalised (the cooks are paid to cook), or gift-oriented in a way that is impossible to reciprocate (as with gifts from anonymous foreign donors to small children, intended as pure gifts [Parry 1989]), they are taken outside the realm of contribution. In this sense, NGOs seem to be establishing themselves as fully-fledged alternatives to family, in part by establishing an alternative economy of care. Removing their clients from the ‘contribution economy’ of their families, perhaps predictably, encourages the refusal to contribute at home; and as we saw with Lesego’s refusal to cook above, the withdrawal of a child’s contribution at home is potentially enough to set off a domino effect with the contributions of the whole family. During my time working at the orphan care, we fielded streams of complaints from grandmothers whose orphaned charges arrived home, claimed to be full after

having eaten at the NGO, and refused to cook, to clean dishes, or to eat the food that had been set aside for them. Because they spent all the time they weren't in school at the NGO, they weren't doing any other work at home either. Accusations that the NGO was breaking apart families were generally framed in these terms. In other words, the very 'crisis of care' and family-collapse discourse that motivates NGO support provokes crises of its own.

Of course, this thesis takes as its central argument the notion that conflict and crisis are productive of kinship, and not simply destructive of it. However, rather than providing for the adaptive reassertion of relatedness, the conflicts that develop around NGO and government contributions are often intransigent. As we saw in Chapter One, families are not in a position to call NGOs or social workers together in the way they can with their own wayward broods. NGOs or social workers may call families together, but to the extent they position themselves outside the family's economy of care they are ill-placed to resolve emergent tensions within it. And of course, because families do not contribute to NGOs or government, which agencies rely on other economies for their solvency, families that called them or complained to them enjoyed little leverage in any case. By the same token, resources are resources – seldom would anyone risk losing them by complaining of their surfeit. And of course, the food basket and other donations always hold out the possibility of transformation into a contribution through someone's appropriate care-work, and the possibility of personhood, difficult to realise as it may be. The children themselves can be – and often are – called and upbraided; but to the extent they understand themselves as sources of major contributions to the family, their usual position in these interventions is upended, and their dependence on family for their own independence (like Tuelo's above) is undermined. In the NGOs they attend and for the social workers that serve them, they are equally the critical objects of the 'contributions' and gifts those agencies attract, which puts them in a comparably powerful position. In both cases, confrontations present the risk of permanent schism; and as such, they are frequently avoided.

Conclusion

Some time after I had returned from fieldwork, I was chatting with Lorato on the phone and asked whether they'd been to the lands recently. "*Haish! Ke kgang,*" she replied – that's an issue.

Years previously, Dipuo had been insistent about buying the family's second lands at Musi, in spite of their distance from home. The land in the area was known for its fertility and he was convinced it would be a good investment. He had even contributed a cow from the herd to assist with the purchase. Suddenly, Lorato explained, he was demanding his cow back.

His wife Mmapula had taken most of the responsibility for ploughing at Musi, but was suddenly made singularly responsible for the lands in question by this gesture. Of course, she had no cow to give her husband. The cow had become land, and while the land produced ample food, it was all either eaten by the family or sold to cover the running costs of both the farm and the household. And of course, women did not typically invest in cattle, as Dipuo knew well. A cow would have to come from among their sons' heads of cattle, if anywhere, which was a request Mmapula could hardly make. The demand was deliberately awkward – and seemed to portend something more.

"My grandmother has realised he's been slowly separating his things for a long time now," Lorato noted.

"Like what?" I asked. "Why would he do that?"

"*Gareitse!*" she said, in a tone of suspicious resignation – we don't know. "First he says Dithaba is his lands, Musi is her lands. Then he gave away the donkeys [Chapter One]. He's been taking all of his clothes to the lands bit by bit. His money, food, now the cow...". She trailed off.

Dipuo's separation, hoarding and demands for 'his' things – like Kagiso's threat to take his cows in the opening of this chapter – illustrate the fundamental uncertainty and dangerous reversibility of contributions, and of the care they instantiate and produce. The transformation initially wrought by the contribution of the cow – by which it became a gesture of care, drawn into the family's long-term cycles of exchange and reproduction – was reversed when Dipuo demanded it back, with potentially profound effects on the further contributions and exchanges it had enabled (the cow for land, the land for food, and so on). Contributions, then, are critical to binding together kin, establishing and adapting responsibilities by age, gender, and generation over time; but they are also means by which kinship can be confounded, rejected and undermined. And this instability and reversibility renders contributions and care prone to *dikgang*, which – though never fully resolved – allow for the active negotiation, renewal and adaptation of family relationships in turn.

As we have seen, contributions are equally critical means of self-making. Contributions to friends, neighbours, and partners are required to build relationships of care with them and establish or assert oneself as a person (as well as to build one's own *lelwapa*, or family/house). And the things and work one is expected to contribute are the same as those expected by one's family. This conundrum affects women and men alike, if in different forms, over the entire life course (as Dipuo's example suggests). The tension between these divergent demands frequently produces *dikgang* – which defer outright fission in the natal family by reasserting its claims and relationships, while making room for the accumulations and redirections required by the project of personhood. On this model, personhood is only meaningful if built *within* the context of kinship, in spite of appearing opposed to it. In contrast, NGO and government provision of comparable things and work – though cast as 'contributions' – behave more like gifts that cannot be reciprocated, shared, nor given in turn; and as such, they disrupt both the contributory economics of the family, and those of self-making as well.

Of course, the tension between the imperatives of self-making and its reliance on one's natal kin, and the role of *dikang* in negotiating that tension, is not confined to questions of contribution and care. In the coming chapter, I will explore similar tensions that arise in attempting to secure intimate relationships – predominantly through the careful management of the ways they are seen, spoken, and known, or *recognised*. The often fraught processes of negotiating the *dikgang* that emerge around pregnancies and marriages aptly illustrate this process of managing recognition; and so it is to a consideration of the reproduction of kinship through conflict that I turn next.

Chapter Three

“We are Seeing Things”: Managing Recognition and Risk in Reproducing Kinship

*Lerato ke lone leo
A re itshwarelaneng
A re buisaneng
Lerato la matlatsi a le nkitsa go nyala*

*That's love
Let's forgive one another
Let's talk together
Love these days makes it difficult for me to marry*

- *Lerato la Malatsi A (Love These Days)*, Culture Spears

It was a hot, quiet Sunday afternoon, and we sat together lazily in the *lelwapa* (courtyard). Kelebogile, Oratile and their niece Tsepho were braiding Lorato's hair. I sat with Mmapula, her granddaughter Boipelo and great-granddaughter Khumo, on a blanket spread out in the shade of the stoop. Boipelo was nursing; Kelebogile's and Oratile's children were lying on the blanket with us, and then clambering over us, and then chasing each other around the yard, their irrepressible energy in stark contrast to our lethargy. Dipuo sat nearby, mending a chair and half-heartedly waving off chickens.

We were joking about the possibility of Boipelo's and Lorato's marriages. Both girls were in their mid-twenties, were in subtly-recognised relationships, and Boipelo had a child; they were becoming prime candidates. Tsepho, Boipelo's younger sister, had asked in passing how much her grandmother Mmapula would expect for *lobola*, or brideprice. “These days, I would insist on at *least* ten cows,” Mmapula asserted. Her daughters and grand-daughters all set up an instant clamouring disagreement. “*Heela!*” exclaimed Kelebogile. “What man can offer that many cows?” “No family can agree to that!” added Oratile. The younger girls laughed and made noises of incredulity and dismay.

“*Heela! Ke a ema ka dinao go le tlhalosetsa*”– I am standing on my feet (insisting) to explain this to you, Mmapula rejoined. She numbered the cattle off on her fingers, identifying their recipients in terms of their relationships to Boipelo and Lorato. She counted one for the girls’ mothers’ *malome*, or uncle, Mmapula’s brother’s son (in place of her brother, who had died); another for their mothers’ uncle on the other side, Dipuo’s brother; two for the girls’ own *malome*, Modiri; two for Dipuo himself; two for other relatives I couldn’t even place; two for the feast. The genealogies were baffling for all of us. But their bafflement didn’t stop the younger women from taking issue with these distributions, arguing all at once that nothing was owed to the old man’s brother, that one cow should be enough for Modiri, or that the cattle for the feast should properly come from the herd at home.

“Now you see why none of us is married from this yard,” Kelebogile observed archly, pulling and twisting at Lorato’s hair.

Tsepho, precocious at seventeen years old, took a different tack. “*Aaa-ee! Nna* I am taking *lobola* for myself!” she insisted with comic vehemence, to general laughter. “How am I supposed to start my family if my husband has given away all his cattle? How will I look after my children?” It was a position I had heard her rehearse almost word-for-word in past conversations; it was both satirical and serious, and always provoked a reaction.

“You can’t take *lobola* for yourself!” her aunts all reproached her, still laughing. “What are you talking about?” her grandmother challenged, sharply.

“At least my mother should get it so she can build, then.” Tsepho allowed, reflecting. “But not my father! What has he done to raise me?” Her father had lived with Tsepho and her siblings all of their lives, but had never taken any formal steps towards marrying their mother. He had had only intermittent work, squandered money on drink, and was generally considered a deadbeat, not least by Tsepho herself.

“*Heela*,” her grandfather intervened, quietly but sternly. “Your *lobola* will come to me. Your father has never paid *lobola* for your mother. You are my child. Unless he pays first, then I will take it.”

“And I’m insisting on ten cows,” her grandmother added.

“*Ijo! Nna* I’m not getting married,” exclaimed Tsepho. “Or I’ll tell my man to keep his cattle so we can build a house,” she allowed, deftly exploiting the congruence of terms for ‘my man’ and ‘my husband’ (both are *monna wa me*).

“*O tla ipona!!*” rejoined her grandmother – you’ll see (lit. you’ll see yourself)! “What happens when he leaves you like that with your children? As for us, we won’t know anything about it.”

“These days women can even pay for their own *lobola*,” observed Lorato, generating another reproachful and incredulous clamour from the women. “*I can’t*,” she clarified; “how can you marry yourself? And if the man can’t even pay *lobola* then how do you know he will look after you? He can even leave. But some women who have money and their men don’t, it happens.”

“*Hei*, even NGOs marry people these days!” added Boipelo, to even greater collective surprise. “Didn’t you hear about that NGO in Mochudi? They take unmarried couples who have long been living together and already have children, and marry them! The NGO even finds the cattle for *lobola*, and rings, they have the whole ceremony!”

“*Ee*, when people like this old woman expect ten cows what else can we do?” observed Oratile.

“*Ija!*” Mmapula exclaimed, derisively. “Then when they have problems, do these people go to the NGO to resolve things? Does the NGO negotiate with the woman’s family? Does the NGO look after their children? Do these NGOs think people have

no parents?” Everyone laughed at the series of incongruous scenarios. “*Mm-mm*,” Dipuo commented, shaking his head in dismay. “*Re bona dilo*.” We are seeing things.

The topic of *lobola* (brideprice) came up from time to time at home, and – as in the conversation above – often triggered a subtler array of questions and concerns around marriage, pregnancy, children, and intimate relationships more generally. Seven of Mmapula’s nine children, and one of her grandchildren, had had children of their own; but by the time I was on fieldwork, none of them had yet married, much to Mmapula’s chagrin. The situation was not unusual, and paralleled that of many other families I knew in the neighbourhood, the village, and elsewhere in the country. While Mmapula was keen to see her children married, she was also – as the discussion above reveals – very concerned that those marriages should be concluded in a specific way, to the point of making things perhaps more difficult for her children (and especially her girls, cf. Gulbrandsen 1986: 16). Her preoccupation with how things should be done drew together many of Mmapula’s abiding worries, and her children’s abiding uncertainties: the success of their self-making, the care of their children, and the solvency, well-being and reproduction of the extended family as a whole – in an unpredictable context of economic flux, epidemic disease, and the widespread intervention of NGOs and government agencies.

Following cues in the scene recounted above, this chapter will engage with the fraught ways in which Tswana kinship is extended and reproduced through intimate relationships, and the legacies of this fraughtness for personhood as well. Specifically, in line with the prevalence of tropes around seeing and knowing that peppered our conversation in the *lelwapa*, I will explore the ways in which intimate relationships are made gradually *recognisable*; and in which their recognition produces risk, crisis, conflict and negotiation – or *dikgang*. And I will suggest that it is in the acquisition and management of these *dikgang* that personhood is made, and that the adaptive continuities of Tswana kinship are asserted. Finally, I will apply these reflections to pregnancy and marriage in a time of AIDS, and suggest that the

risk of contracting the disease is of the same order as other risks Batswana routinely face in managing intimate relationships – though the dynamics of recognition and *dikgang* differ. In contradistinction to the received wisdom of governmental and non-governmental programming around the epidemic, I will suggest it is the latter concern around recognition, as much as or more than the risk of illness and death, that raises the stakes of HIV infection.

As we saw in the Introduction, much has been made of the structural uniqueness of Tswana marriage patterns (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Radcliffe-Brown 1950; Schapera 1950). The legacy of marriage preferences for parallel as well as cross-cousins has rendered a highly mutable field of kin relations; over time the indeterminacy and multiplicity of relationships any one person bears to their kin means that their role is susceptible to constant renegotiation based on factors like wealth, power, contributions of care, and so on (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 138). Marriage practice, in other words, historically has stood at the heart of the structural ambiguity and flexibility of Tswana kinship. And while it is rare for parallel cousins to marry today, the principles of ambiguity and flexibility, and of responsiveness to extra-structural variables, remain. Unsurprising, then, that anthropological literature on the Tswana ranging back to the 1930s should be crowded with public disputes around marriage: transcripts of *kgotla* (customary court) cases recount promises made and broken, responsibilities asserted and refused (Comaroff & Roberts 1977; Griffiths 1997; Schapera 1940). Equally unsurprising that Batswana and anthropologists alike might suggest that the institution of marriage has long been in crisis and decline (Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Gulbrandsen 1986; van Dijk 2010: 287). The sheer volume of these disputes is matched only by similar disputes around pregnancy, which also has exercised anthropological and popular concern for almost a century (Schapera 1933). Indeed, Anne Griffiths describes Tswana pregnancy and marriage as “the world of negotiation and dispute” (Griffiths 1997: 106).

The bulk of that literature, implicitly and explicitly, understands the conflict and crisis it describes to be the result of major social transformation. Like similar work from elsewhere in Africa, it supposes that the “Western impact upon African

societies has been...expressed through the transformation of their marriage systems” (Gulbrandsen 1986: 7), and takes courtship, pregnancy and marriage as means of tracking ‘cultural change’ in the wake of colonisation, missionisation, labour migration, and latterly commodity capitalism, modernisation, or neoliberalisation (Comaroff & Roberts 1977; Griffiths 1997; Gulbrandsen 1986; Ingstad et al 1992; Schapera 1933, 1940; van Dijk 2010, 2012). Extensive demographic evidence is presented to establish the increasing rarity of marriage – particularly for women; the increasing incidence of female-headed households; and the increasing regularity of both premarital pregnancy, and extra-marital concubinage and sexuality. The animating concern underlying the arguments offered – often, though not always, echoing the concerns of Batswana themselves – is with the implications of these changes: in terms of children’s illegitimacy (Gulbrandsen 1986; Schapera 1933), “transgressive sexuality...and the qualities of marital and intergenerational relationships” (Klaits 2010: 47; see also Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Livingston 2003; Schapera 1933), the reproduction of culture and communities (Schapera 1940), legal practice (Griffiths 1997; Comaroff & Roberts 1977) and the role of women (Griffiths 1997).

In this chapter, I contribute to this conversation in two ways: by exploring the experience of such disputes at home, from within and between households instead of in the formal arena of the *kgotla*; and by considering how discord around pregnancy and marriage plays out contemporarily, especially in the context of AIDS and its associated interventions. While the literature cited above gives thorough proof and explanation of changes in social practice around pregnancy and marriage, I want to suggest that *dikgang* arising around both reflect not only the strain of social change, but also ambiguities in structure and practice that have a more long-standing, continuous quality. Like other ambiguities we have identified in Tswana kinship, these serve not only to generate the constant conflict and negotiation that has been exhaustively recorded, but to enable continuous adaptation (with greater and lesser degrees of success) in uncertain times as well. Rather than simply an indication of change and breakdown, in other words, *dikgang* preserve adaptive ambiguity, and are therefore critical features in the reproduction of Tswana kinship. The presence of

these adaptive continuities is signalled perhaps most clearly in the fact that AIDS has failed fundamentally to alter the way Batswana approach intimate relationships – in spite of appearing to target that intimacy, rendering sex, pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and the care of the ill potentially dangerous, even fatal, acts.

Through the stories that follow, I contend that courtship, pregnancy and marriage (in that order, as they are most frequently experienced) describe a sort of continuum of risk acquisition and crisis negotiation, such that an increasing burden of *dikgang* is borne and must be addressed by individuals, couples, and more and more of their kin as they emerge from one phase through the others. Kinship is formed and transformed – between couples, within their families, and between their families – through this joint acquisition, recognition, and negotiation of risk and crisis. Conversely, kinship may be – and often is – subtly rejected in refusals to accept and negotiate the shared dimensions of *dikgang*. Specifically, I suggest that this continuum, and the acceptances and rejections it traces, is expressed in a relationship's *recognisability* (compare Bloch's [1995] account of marriages emerging into visibility in Zafimaniry houses). Relationships move from the realm of invisibility, silence, secrecy, and the 'unknown', through gradually more visible, spoken, and 'known' phases (usually provoked by pregnancy), into the more public, inter-familial sphere of formal visibility and articulation. At this stage, extended kin may be called for face-to-face negotiation, ideally culminating in the public vows and performances of a marriage ceremony. The progression is generally slow and tentative, and may be called to a halt, otherwise stymied or reversed at any stage; and it is often refusals of recognition that make such breaks clear. It is this risk of rejection and refused recognition that increases from stage to stage, as the stakes of visibility to and involvement with more and more distant kin grow. And because such rejections might bear long-term repercussions for either partner's chances of acquiring additional networks of kin in future (by affecting their perceived marriageability, for example), or have serious implications for the provision of care to children and to extended family networks alike (see Chapter Two), that risk is sharpened. Unlike the customary court hearings of such disputes – which undertake (with mixed success) to produce definitive resolution to a given issue, with

maximum recognisability – I will show that inter-familial negotiations suspend both resolution and recognition, and leave the opportunity of kin-acquisition as open as possible, on as many levels as possible, for as long as possible, as a means of absorbing the risks involved. As we will see, this open-endedness produces additional *dikgang* in its turn, which may (or may not) be addressed through pregnancy and marriage negotiations – whether in the generation in which they occur, or the generation(s) thereafter – demonstrating in this sphere, as in others, the importance of cycles of conflict and irresolution to the production and reproduction of kinship.

As previous chapters have illustrated, the acquisition of *dikgang* – through mobility, through building, or through work and the accumulation of responsibilities to contribute care – also plays a critical role in establishing personhood. In this chapter, we will explore the ways that attempts to build and extend networks of kin through intimate relationships, and the *dikgang* those attempts involve, form personhood as well. In each of these spheres, being known, seen, traced, or otherwise recognised renders a person vulnerable (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275); and while Batswana carefully conceal and fragment the selves they make to contain this vulnerability (*ibid.*), nevertheless some exposure to recognition is both inevitable and necessary in the sphere of extending and reproducing kinship. Like tensions we have explored elsewhere in this thesis, the tension between imperatives of concealment and recognisability in self-making produces *dikgang*, the ability to manage which becomes a critical criterion of personhood. The dynamics of *dikgang* – and related dynamics of recognition – play out differently for women and men, such that personhood is achieved for each in different ways and at different stages along the relationship continuum. Below, I will explore the ways that women and their relationships are made recognisable, largely through their bodies, in pregnancy; and those in which men and their relationships are made recognisable largely through the marriage negotiations they undertake. I will also consider the concealments both allow, and the legacies of the *dikgang* both produce – including the ways both unearth the unresolved *dikgang* of past pregnancies and marriage negotiations among kin, and bring them into intergenerational recognition in turn. Finally, I will turn to a

consideration of what these dynamics of recognition suggest for understanding the stakes of intimacy in a time of AIDS.

Negotiating Pregnancy

Phokoje wa morago dintsa diammona.

The dogs chase the last jackal.

When Boipelo's belly began showing, her mother Boikanyo ran halfway across the village to her own mother Mmapula's home, crying. Boipelo, Boikanyo's eldest child but only twenty, was pregnant. Boikanyo's report to her mother was frustrated and despairing: "Who could the boy be, in this village? They're all useless! Unemployed, no money. How will we look after a baby?" Boipelo had five younger siblings, the youngest of whom was only just in school; they all lived together in a cramped, two-room lean-to made of scrap metal. Boipelo had just finished technical schooling, and her mother had hoped she would get a job, and help them to build at home. But now there was a baby.

Lorato fell pregnant at roughly the same time as Boipelo, who was her younger cousin. Lorato knew about Boipelo's pregnancy from the beginning, but told no-one at home of her own. Knowing it would put enormous pressure on the family to have two babies at once, Lorato discussed abortion with her boyfriend; they even researched clinics across the border in South Africa, where the procedure was legal and safer. But he was well-employed, had already built a house in his home village and was building in the city. Perhaps, she thought, they could manage to raise a baby on their own. They decided to keep the child.

Lorato started showing shortly after Boipelo, at four months. When Mmapula noticed, she sent Kelebogile and Oratile to call the girl and confront her. Having had her suspicions confirmed, Mmapula ran down the street to the neighbours', crying.

In this section, I examine the risks, crises, and negotiations – or *dikgang* – involved in Tswana pregnancies. I have chosen to discuss pregnancy before marriage largely because with most of the people I knew in Botswana, it came first (in both their understanding and experience; compare Schapera's [1933] account of the increasing regularity of previously-unknown premarital pregnancy, with Comaroff and Roberts [1977: 99] account of its normality). Pregnancy marked a sort of watershed in relationships. Pregnancy is often, though not always, the point at which a courtship becomes recognisable; it brings a courtship into the sphere of the seen and the spoken, the known, and the negotiable. This shift is part of what gives pregnancy an aspect of crisis, for the soon-to-be parents and their families alike. As we will see, it is a risky shift: the pregnancy renders the *existence* of an intimate relationship apparent, but not all of its critical detail. There is no incontrovertible means of identifying the father, and no certainty that he will consent to be recognised – nor that his family will. On the other hand, if he is willing to be identified but he and his family are not particularly well-off, the mother's family has little hope of laying charges or claiming financial support for the coming child – and may wish he'd stayed hidden. If he can be identified and is well-off, charges may be laid (a practice Schapera noted as an innovation in the colonial era; 1933: 84); but they may not be honoured, and may thereby produce doubt and uncertainty in the relationship itself. In any case, the issue cannot be avoided on the part of the mother's family: the observability of her pregnant body forces them into these conundrums, and requires careful decision-making and deft negotiation. As in other situations we have explored, the trick is to strike a balance: between identifying and laying claim to potential sources of support on the one hand, and leaving opportunities for the relationship to continue to evolve, on the other.

Below, I examine the ways this balance was sought in the parallel but distinctly different pregnancies of Boipelo and Lorato; and the ways in which the *dikgang* their pregnancies produced were negotiated within their relationships, within their family, and between their family and the families of their partners. I also explore the effects of this process for the girls' respective roles in those configurations, and for the emergence of their personhood in turn.

After her emotional visit to the neighbours down the lane, Mmapula gathered her resolve and set the complex but familiar mechanisms of pregnancy negotiation in motion – on two fronts. Mmapula asked her sons – Lorato and Boipelo’s uncles – to call and talk to the girls individually, and to find out who the fathers of the children were. They learned that Lorato’s boyfriend was older, and well-employed, though he was from far away. Mmapula took hope: if the negotiations were handled properly, he would be in a good position to support the child, and might ultimately prove suitable marriage material. In the meanwhile, she could assert a fine against him for impregnating Lorato. She dispatched the uncles to get his phone number and summon him to the yard. Boipelo’s boyfriend, however, was a former neighbour, young and sporadically employed, and his family was not particularly well-off. They lived near enough that they could easily be called or visited; but given the limits on the support they could provide, and the unlikelihood of a charge being paid, the matter was not pursued. In fact, the boy’s family was not even officially notified about the pregnancy until after the child had been born – though he and Boipelo remained involved.

Lorato’s uncles did pursue her boyfriend. Unfortunately, he refused to answer repeated phone calls, evading his summons. On a couple of occasions Lorato was with him when the calls came in, and identified the callers for him as her uncles; when he still refused to answer, she began to doubt his willingness to take responsibility for the child he had fathered. “He said, ‘I haven’t done anything wrong, why should I be called?’” she explained to me, still hurt by the refusal. “I told him he couldn’t refuse to speak to my uncles; I asked him if he was refusing the child; he didn’t say anything. I think that’s what made me to be a bit depressed during my pregnancy.” They fought about the topic periodically for months afterwards.

Eventually, Mmapula – acting in place of Lorato’s late mother – took things back into her own hands. She asked for the phone number of the man’s family, which

Lorato acquired from him and passed along accordingly; and she phoned his mother, on the other side of the country, to report the pregnancy and assert the charge. She would have preferred to call the man's family to her yard, but given the distances involved and the apparent hesitance of the man to acknowledge summons, she decided to hedge her bets. She told the man's mother that they expected P5,000 (roughly £425, enough for a couple of cows or a good bull), for 'making our daughter's breasts fall' and for the care of the child. The man's mother agreed to report the charge to her son, but promised little more. The matter was left there.

After that point, the man was 'known' to Lorato's family, sufficiently for them to allow her to go to visit him for a few days at a time, and for her grandmother to ask after him and to talk or joke about him as a potential future husband. Lorato's uncles scolded her for laziness with the warning that once she was married, they would not take her back, insisting that she should develop appropriate work habits now that she "had a man". It was a tentative knowledge, nonetheless, because the man had refused his summons and never officially visited the yard; and he had yet to pay the fine levied upon him. When Lorato reported to her grandmother that she was off to see him, Mmapula occasionally said, "And when is he coming to greet us? Tell him we are still waiting for him. One of these days something may happen to you and we will not even know where to look for you or whom to ask." When the man came to visit Lorato, he stayed in his car down the lane, or – if there was a major event on at home – came to sit just inside the fence under cover of darkness; but he never came into the *lelwapa*, or to greet us formally. Boipelo's boyfriend did the same, though he had been a frequent visitor in the yard before her pregnancy and was familiar with the family. He, too, was tentatively 'known' as the father of Boipelo's child, and Mmapula occasionally asked after him in private; but jokes about Boipelo marrying in his village were virtually non-existent compared to those levelled at Lorato.

While pregnancies signify the existence of serious relationships, and make them formally known to the families of both partners, they don't necessarily stabilise the relationship itself. A friend demonstrated this persistent uncertainty to me on the bus home one day. She had been fielding amorous text messages from an older man in

the village. “*Hei!* The way this one was after me when I was pregnant!” she commented offhand, much to my astonishment. She caught my shock and laughed. “You don’t know these men. They propose to us when we’re pregnant because they know they don’t have to worry about impregnating us! No chance to get caught!” I asked what her boyfriend thought about it. “O! Why should I tell him? He was too worried to touch me the whole time I was pregnant. What should I do? And anyway he probably has his girls,” she added with a note of bitterness, thumbing out a reply on her phone. While pregnancy and the fines and negotiations attendant upon it rendered some relationships recognisable, my friend seemed to indicate, it safely concealed others, too (compare Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275).

And yet, when Lorato suspected her long-term boyfriend of infidelity, it was the fine agreed upon between their families during her pregnancy that he fell back on to reassure her. “He said he could never cheat on me after he was fined by my parents,” she explained to me. “If he did, if he got caught, he would be forced to pay immediately, and he doesn’t have money. We can’t just break things,” she added, “now other people have to be involved.” Several months later, they did in fact ‘just break things’ – and while Lorato informed her grandmother after the fact, neither family was otherwise involved, and the fine went uncollected.

Fines or agreements settled between two families around a pregnancy, then, are ambiguous enough that couples may fall back on them as a source of reassurance and commitment; try to test and evade them; or ultimately ignore and drop them altogether. Gulbrandsen (1986: 22) notes that disputes around such fines are taken to *kgotla* (customary court) for formal resolution less and less, in spite of the tendency of these courts to favour the woman’s cause. He explains this paucity of prosecution in terms of guardians’ wariness about their daughters gaining reputations for being quick to sue (ibid.). I suggest something simpler is at work: having failed to draw another family into a mutual recognition and negotiation of crisis, the would-be complainant’s family has already failed to make the would-be defendant’s family kin. Drawing the family into formal processes of negotiation at the *kgotla* may produce a final resolution – usually in the form of a payment awarded – but neither

the formal process nor the final resolution will produce a husband, nor the community of shared risk and continuous crisis-negotiation or *dikgang*-management that makes kin. Indeed, such formal resolution will ultimately foreclose that possibility. Where fines and agreements are left standing, they can always be reopened and pursued; the possibility of things changing, and of opportunities to form kinship re-emerging, is left open.

*

Her grandmother and aunt swaddled the baby boy and took him away before Lorato even knew of his death. At seven months, Lorato had gone into hospital, short of breath and with high blood pressure. The doctors performed an emergency Caesarean, but the child's lungs had begun to bleed, and by the time Lorato woke he was gone.

A small grave was dug adjacent to the room in which Mmapula and most of the children slept, virtually in the short pathway that lead into the *lelwapa* (courtyard) past the outdoor kitchen. It was sealed with cement. It was some time before I was told where the grave lay, and I was surprised when I heard: it was a space where old plant pots or dirty buckets were left, where large cooking pots were tipped to dry, and where the children played freely, often running over top of it as they came charging around the edge of the house. But it needn't have surprised me. Kelebogile's first child, lost at roughly two years old, lay under the grandmother's room next to it, buried there before the addition had been built. "That way she's close to her mother in case she needs anything," Lorato explained, explaining her own child's burial by way of her aunt's lost girl.

Lorato's cousin Boipelo had been delivered of a baby girl shortly after. The two cousins had been kept in confinement together with the newborn for a time, in the room they shared. Both were taken to be *motsetse* – a term for new mothers in confinement – and neither was meant to move out of the house or yard for a month (see a similar description of confinement in Schapera 1940: 234). "*Hei!* That baby

cried!” complained Lorato, eliding the difficulty of coping with her own loss in such a context. Both girls were unable to have guests, and neither could visit her boyfriend nor receive him at home. Lorato visited the nearby towns once or twice in the interim with a mutual friend – who had to drive into the yard to pick her up and drop her off within the fenceline. There were no particular constraints on her moving around outside of the village, but so long as she was within the village she couldn’t set foot beyond the gate. Lorato was uncertain of the reasoning, but connected it loosely to drought, and harm to cattle and people who might cross her path (compare Schapera 1940: 234). When he had determined that her confinement time was up, her grandfather Dipuo woke Lorato early in the morning, before anyone was moving around in the village. He made her wash her feet, and then took her on a short tour out of the yard, around the nearby dam and home again, sprinkling the ground where she walked with the same liquid in which she had bathed.

“It was better for Boipelo,” asserted Lorato as she recounted the experience for me. “She had to start work with the census-taking, so they let her out of the house early.” I was surprised: the census taking was only a two-week contract, and the workdays were long. It was well paid, but her baby would have been less than a month old when the census began. It seemed a strange time for her to go to work, especially when she should still have been in confinement. But it lined up with what I had seen since I’d returned to the Legae household. Boipelo’s baby girl, Khumo, was only five or six months old, and still breastfeeding by the time I arrived. But Boipelo had been making a continuous and concerted effort to secure work. She held down a catering job for several weeks with the local police college, which meant she was gone from early in the morning until evening, sometimes six days a week. Her teenaged sister Tsepho, who was by then out of school, took over the bulk of the child’s care, sharing it with their mother whenever she was not working herself. As soon as that contract was finished, Boipelo was busily seeking another, and another. I found it odd that she was spending such little time with her baby, and that her family had raised no objection (aside from Tsepho, who was liable to complain theatrically about most things). “When you are a mother, you work,” asserted Lorato, simply. It rang true: in comparison, though she was old enough, Tsepho was not expected to

seek paid work at all – her main tasks involved the heavy domestic work of the household. The only censure I’d heard voiced about Boipelo was her grandmother’s suspicion that she was being “sneaky” with her money, and using more of it to buy herself things than to buy her baby things or contribute to help her family, which were now her primary responsibilities of care (see Chapter Two).

Like other sorts of movement (Chapter One), then, a woman’s movement out of the yard and around the village after the birth (or loss) of a child presents a potential danger to be contained – in other words, a sort of *kgang*. I suggest that confinement helps to contain that risk in part by momentarily reversing the recognition that a woman’s pregnancy brings upon her and the relationship that produced it: it renders her and her child invisible, inaccessible, and their status unknown. (Not long after Lady had been allowed out and about, her six-year-old uncle, Thabo, remarked to her, “*Ga re go itse, akere!*” in an indulgent tone – we don’t know you, do we?) And this reversal of recognisability is critical to protecting both mother and child from witchcraft and illness (a practice that persists, like many others in this account, from the colonial era, see Schapera 1940: 233-4). Even old friends who had given birth while I was in the village suggested I visit them at the clinic before they were sent home, “because you know how these elders are about witchcraft”.⁷ The gradual re-emergence of the new mother and baby into public interaction after their confinement also suggests the importance of controlling recognition.

Crucially, the *dikgang* attendant on birth are carried exclusively by the woman’s natal family. Neither the father nor his family has any formal part to play in taking on or ameliorating these *dikgang*, and there is no negotiation attendant on the process. If anything, he and his kin are conscientiously excluded. And this is the case even for married couples: with their first child, women will return to their natal homestead for confinement after the birth (which is increasingly conducted in clinics and hospitals). I suggest that this unilateral responsibility for the risks of birth and their containment works primarily to produce and reproduce kinship between the

⁷ I did visit one or two women who were *motsetse* – once quite by accident – but was told that it was permissible because “white people don’t believe in witchcraft”. Close (female) family friends or neighbours may visit *motsetse* freely but discreetly.

woman, her child (if there is one), and her natal family, who will be important figures in her child's life whether she has married and moved away from them or not (especially her brothers, but also her sisters and parents). But whereas birth produces new ways for a woman to relate to her family, it produces few comparable ways for her to relate to her partner or his family differently (aside from claims on support comparable to those that pregnancy conferred, which – as we have seen – may or may not be honoured). It is in this sense that pregnancy and birth work first and foremost to convey a new dimension of personhood upon a woman: linked, as in past examples, to the acquisition and management of *dikgang*, to the ability to create and reconfigure kin, and to a novel position *vis a vis* her natal family.

Of course, the *dikgang* emerging from pregnancies are not confined to fraught dynamics of recognition around establishing paternity through fines or managing the dangers posed to and by post-natal women. As Boipelo's commitment to finding work indicates, they also emerge around the provision of care to the newborn child – and specifically, the recognition of responsibilities to contribute (Chapter Two). Lorato's boyfriend had provided well for her baby's needs, and Lorato had a generous stockpile of clothes, Pampers, toiletries, nutritional supplements, bathtubs, and other supplies stashed in her room before she'd lost the child. She spoke often and with deep fondness of the time she had visited her boyfriend, and he had given her a sum of cash to buy whatever she needed for the baby from the shops. To hear her tell it, pregnancy had been a time of plenty for Lorato; she had had comparatively few responsibilities, had been accorded comparative freedom to visit her boyfriend, and had been handsomely supplied with clothes, food, magazines, cellphone units, and virtually anything else she desired – as well as everything that would be needed for the baby. She sometimes joked it was the best job she'd ever had – and, unlike other jobs, she hadn't been expected to provide tokens of respect and support to her uncle or grandmother, but was able to keep everything for herself.

While the gifts Lorato's boyfriend had provided were not official gestures in the way that gifts presented in anticipation of marriage are (see below), they did indicate a potential willingness and ability to provide for the care of Lorato and their child

(compare Klaits 2010: 43) – a contribution to Lorato’s natal household that marked his acceptance of responsibility for her and a willingness to behave like kin, in keeping with his level of income (Chapter Two). The gifts were, in many respects, his one gesture towards recognisability; and they were a critical dimension in the family’s recognition of him, tentative as it was (compare similar allowances on the part of family in Schapera 1933: 80). At the same time, they did not stand in for a formal acknowledgement of the family’s claims on him, and – coming, as they did, through Lorato – carefully evaded the sort of recognition those claims (and the ongoing cycle of negotiations they precipitate) would establish over him. They were gifts given to Lorato, not debts paid or contributions made to her family; and as such they evaded *dikgang*.

By comparison, Boipelo’s sporadically-employed boyfriend had provided her with little or nothing prior to their child’s birth – which exacerbated his effacement at home. After losing her own child, Lorato found the baby supplies with which she was left burdensome, and decided to give them all to her under-supplied cousin. “Did you know my aunts had the same situation?” Lorato added. “When Kelebogile was having her first child, Oratile got pregnant with Lesego at about the same time. Kelebogile’s boyfriend was working and provided everything she needed, and for the baby. But Ntlhale was younger, and the boyfriend was a bit useless, he wasn’t working or anything. So they were struggling at home having two babies to look after. Kelebogile lost her first child when she was maybe a year and something. She gave everything, all the things the boyfriend had bought, to Oratile.” The grudging, subtly bitter attitudes towards their mutual responsibilities, which often provoked squabbles between the two sisters (Chapter Two), suddenly took on a new dimension.

“Actually, that’s why I didn’t buy a stroller,” Lorato added. I didn’t follow. She explained that her boyfriend had wanted them to buy a stroller – an expensive and uncommon item among families in the village. “He was insisting but I refused. How can I have a stroller, Boipelo having nothing? People were going to pressure me.” Reflecting on her aunts’ previous predicament and the legacy of bitterness it seemed

to have spawned – which had re-emerged for scrutiny in Boipelo's and Lorato's situation – Lorato was describing yet more careful balances to be struck. On the one hand, she had to make clear her boyfriend's willingness and ability to provide for her, allowing her family to recognise it (and him) without making a show; and on the other, she had to conceal this support in order to minimise her continuing responsibilities to contribute to her natal household, and to keep demands on her partner reasonable, sustainable, and primarily oriented towards herself.

On my return to the village after the loss of her child, I noted a change in Lorato – particularly towards her younger cousins. Where she had always been friendly, playful and at ease with them, she now tended to scold and speak sharply to them, gruffly sending them on errands or putting them to work. I mentioned it to her one day, and she replied with conviction: "*Ke motsadi*," I am a parent. Certainly the children heeded most of her instructions and took her seriously in her new incarnation. The expectations for her – to find paid employment, for example – were not quite as urgent as they were for Boipelo; and I never heard her described as a mother in the same way. And yet, Lorato's parents – including her aunts, uncles, and grandparents – often chastised her for playing with the children or being too familiar with them. "*O motsadi*," Kelebogile had reminded her one day after she'd been sitting and chatting companionably with her younger cousins, in the same simple terms Lorato had explained herself to me. "You can't just play with the children like that anymore." Lorato stepped up her discipline accordingly.

While pregnancy leaves considerable ambiguity in relationships between the new parents and between their respective families, then, in one thing it is unambiguous: it reorganises a woman's relationship to her natal family, and confers a degree of personhood upon her. Even if the woman cannot carry the child to term, she nevertheless becomes *motsadi* (parent), and *mosadi* (woman), by virtue of her pregnancy. In Setswana the verb for being pregnant is *go ithwala*: the verb *go rwala*, to carry or bear, cast in the reflexive – so that it is something one does to oneself. To conceive or be pregnant, in other words, is to carry oneself or to bear oneself, as well as one's child – a description that alludes richly to its importance in a woman's self-

making. This new status, of course, is perfected gradually, and entails a long learning curve: Lorato had to learn to distance herself from the other children of the yard, to treat and speak to them differently; and Boipelo had to find work to support her child, and learn to manage her resources more selflessly. While both young women stumbled and fell over some of these new expectations, they did not cease to be women and parents as a result; pregnancy conferred that role on them, irreversibly. Their pregnancies were incontrovertibly recognisable in the women's bodies, which publicly marked their sexuality, fertility, and new responsibilities of care. And the *dikgang* generated by this recognisability – from questions of how to care for the child to claims against boyfriends and the containment of risks posed by postnatal bodies – were all managed within and by their natal family. It is for this reason, I suggest, that a woman's pregnancy serves to reorganise and sustain her relationships in her natal family, whereas its effects on making kin of her partner or his family are less clear.

Notably, neither Boipelo's nor Lorato's boyfriend were spoken of as men or parents after having fathered offspring. In line with the argument above, I suggest this stasis of status relates first to their indeterminate recognisability in the pregnancy, and by extension to their exclusion from the management of *dikgang*. In the next section, I will suggest that it is marriage that confers a degree of recognition, the ability to extend kin relations, and therefore manhood, on men. But as the parallel experiences of Boipelo and Lorato's uncles, Kagiso and Moagi, indicate, extending and reproducing kinship and asserting personhood through marriage is an even more uncertain and fraught process than through pregnancy.

Negotiating Marriage

Bogwe gabobole.

Relationship-in-law does not decay.

“Ah, it’s not going to work out,” Kagiso admitted with resignation and a slow smile as he stood under the tree to which my hammock was tied, absentmindedly pulling leaves from one of its thorny branches.

It had already been perhaps two months since Kagiso, his parents, and some older cousins from another village had been on a formal visit to the house of his girlfriend with the hopes of asking for her in marriage. They had left without ceremony on a Saturday afternoon, and no-one had said anything about it. I only heard about it later, when I found the cousins drinking tea in the *lelwapa* and chatting formally with Dipuo.

The foray had not gone well: the girl’s father had refused even to receive the delegation, much less to begin negotiating with them. Much of the cousins’ chat over tea circled around how strange the man’s reaction had been. I had spoken briefly to Kagiso behind the house that day; he was disappointed, and angered by the man’s behaviour, but was already strategizing for workable alternatives. His parents were less hopeful. The old man had shaken his head, implied nothing could be done, and left for the lands promptly after taking tea. The old woman spent the entire following day lying on her blankets on the stoop, sleeping and pondering. It was perhaps the only time I’d seen her stop her incessant movement for so long – as if resolution of the impasse lay in her stillness; or as if she were healing a familial wound the way an invalid contains and heals from illness, by staying home.

The rest of us had taken our cues from Kagiso’s determination, and held out hope for him; and so his resignation as we chatted by the hammock came as a surprise to me. “Are you just going to give up, then?” I asked, realising there may have been a reason for the family’s silence on the issue in the intervening months. “What can I

do?” he countered, smiling again. “You know, that time, he refused even to come out into the yard to greet us. He just hid in the house. The wife (his girlfriend’s stepmother) kept telling us he was coming, but he didn’t come.”

Kagiso had been dating the girl for two years by then, and he was keen to marry. He had been working assiduously for years to set aside the money needed to pay *lobola* (bride price): he was a driver for a local NGO, ran a small business that collected garbage for council, founded a driving school, and had started running a shop. He had become respected as a preacher in his church; he knew he was a good catch.

But Kagiso had had an inkling of problems around his girlfriend’s father for some time. The man avoided him, refused to look him in the eye or greet him when they passed each other in the street or at the shop, and had done so for some time before the formal visit. After his “research,” as Kagiso called it, he concluded that the father had refused even to speak to Kagiso and his parents because there was some kind of ongoing conflict with the mother’s family – likely related to the custody of the girl herself. “Maybe he took the child when he wasn’t supposed to, and they are still disputing it,” he ventured. “That would explain why he refuses her to visit her cousins in the city.” Whether the girl’s parents had been married was unclear; but Kagiso’s suspicion focused more on the girl’s mother’s untimely death. “This man was an electrician, he went to jail for trapping a thief with electricity once,” he explained, without expanding on how this ‘trapping’ had been achieved. “Who can say?” he concluded, alluding to unsavoury possibilities. “But he knows I know something – that’s why he can’t look at me or greet me.” I asked whether the girl herself had told him anything. “Even she doesn’t know the whole story,” he noted; “but then there are things she’s not willing to say, even to me. Some other things she has come close to telling me, but in the end she keeps quiet.”

“He could have come out at least to reject us,” he mused, after a pause. “He refused to come out because he knew he had no right to say anything. Her cousins told her straight, that man has no say in your marriage. Why is that? The stepmother knows

what he's like, too," Kagiso added. "She even said to the girl, 'You know him – this thing, you have to do for yourself.'"

I'd never heard anyone so much as talk about just getting married on their own, or 'for themselves'. "How do you do that?" I asked. He shrugged. "Without the parents? I don't know. I don't think there is a way."

"Getting married is a problem," I observed.

"I'll keep trying," said Kagiso, flashing his confident smile. It wasn't clear whether he meant to keep trying with the girl's family, or just to keep trying to get married – with another girl if necessary. The ambiguity seemed deliberate.

For months, there was talk of organising a trip north to go and meet the rest of the girl's maternal family there and conduct negotiations with them. The girl often went to visit and stay with them, and had gone as usual in the spring. The trip, however, never materialised. In fact, I never saw the girl again.

In this section, I examine some of the risks, crises, conflicts and negotiations – or *dikgang* – attendant on serious relationships and marriage. As the conversation recounted at the outset of this chapter suggests, marriage is a highly desirable state for men, women, and their families alike; but it involves the careful negotiation of a multiplicity of expectations and – as in Kagiso's case – tangled family histories as well. Marriage, for the Tswana, is a lengthy process rather than a specific event (Comaroff and Roberts 1977). Throughout this process, recognition is extended step-wise: from a man to his parents, and from his parents to his uncles (who must negotiate on his behalf); from his kin to his girlfriend's parents; from her parents to her extended family; and so on, until in the final marriage ceremonies the relationship is made formally recognisable to God (at church), the state (at the District Administrator's office), and the communities of both spouses at large (in feasts and celebrations – to which we will return in Chapter 5). At each stage,

negotiations face the risk of increasingly public disagreement, refusal or failure – which eventualities are often experienced as crises, both in the relationship itself and among negotiating kin, whose contributions to the process are key (as Mmapula’s despondency above suggests). The balance to be struck here is between the interests of the marrying couple and those of their families, who may rely on them in various ways (Gulbrandsen 1986); among the interests of extended kin on both sides; and between the two networks of kin, who may have disparate expectations of how the negotiation should be run and concluded. Below, I examine how this thorny process played out for both Kagiso and his elder brother Moagi, and consider what their examples show us about the extension of kinship through affines and the implications of the process for manhood.

While some of the details around Kagiso’s failed proposal initially struck me as exceptional, the failure itself was common enough; and on reflection, his misfortune had more in common with other failed attempts than I expected. His older brother Moagi, for example, had embarked on marriage negotiations with his then-girlfriend and the mother of his nine-year-old boy a couple of years previously. The build-up had been extended: roughly two years before the negotiations had even begun, he had undertaken construction on a two-and-a-half room house in the yard of his parents where he could settle a new wife. His parents had insisted upon it as a prerequisite to undertaking negotiations on his behalf (an insistence they didn’t make with his younger brother Kagiso – though perhaps the existing extra house obviated it). When – well over a year later – it was completed, and after they had scraped together enough money to make the long journey to the woman’s home village, the woman’s family had been particularly demanding in their *lobola* requests (contrast the colonial-era expectation that whatever the man offered would have to be taken; Schapera 1940: 87). “They wanted a house built for them, so many cows, a nice suit for the old man and dresses for the old woman, money, blankets, everything!” Lorato recounted. Moagi’s delegation replied they had heard the request, and returned home, nonplussed.

When I asked after the situation on my return, nobody was clear about what had happened, or where things stood. Schapera notes that during the colonial era, it was customarily considered good manners to prolong marriage negotiations (1940: 89); whether things had been delayed in a mannerly fashion, or suspended indefinitely without hope of conclusion was not clear. The process, in other words, had faded back into a certain inscrutability – much as it had with Kagiso after the initial attempted negotiation. Moagi's sought-after bride occasionally called to check on her son, who lived with us; and she even came to stay once, for a couple of days. However, the woman now called Moagi's sisters to ask them to send her son to visit, rather than calling Moagi himself, causing everyone discomfort and some consternation. Moagi's sisters and cousins openly considered and teased him about other marriageable women. Whether this was significant of some breakdown that had happened before the marriage negotiations took place, and had railroaded them, or whether it had been caused by the mysterious suspension of those negotiations – or whether, indeed, there had been no breakdown at all – no-one could say. "Maybe she didn't want to get married to him, and told her parents to make it impossible," Lorato surmised. "Or maybe the parents didn't like him and made it impossible by themselves. *Gareitse*," she concluded, as she often did: we don't know. The relationship had receded into opacity.

Comaroff and Roberts (1977) describe this ambiguity as a critical feature of Tswana relationships, and use it to suggest a reconfiguration of what we understand by 'marriage'. Drawing on a range of court cases, they demonstrate convincingly "the possibility of construing most relationships as *either* a marriage *or* an informal union" (1977: 113), depending on such factors as whether the partners were officially known to or visited one another's families, whether they lived together or had children together, and whether marriage had been promised or discussed (all, incidentally, indicators of the relationship's advanced – if still circumscribed – recognition). This interpretive flexibility recalls Tsepho's conflation of 'man' and 'husband' at the outset of the chapter, and resonates with a widespread tendency for men to express an immediate interest in marriage as an informal courtship strategy (which propositions – often made in passing on the street – are usually described by

Batswana, in English, as ‘proposals’). Comaroff and Roberts argue that “marriage may profitably be seen as a state of *becoming* rather than as a state of *being*”, and further that ambiguity is not only “an integral feature of the system” (1997: 114) of marriage and relationships, but a condition of their formation, and a trait perpetuated by practice.

While Tswana marriage is certainly processual and ambiguous, its ideal is also to eliminate ambiguity. The Tswana make provision to marry the dead, for a man to marry his children, for boys to marry their mothers on behalf of their late fathers (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Dahl 2009a: 1) – all in order to ceremonially formalise long-standing relationships between two families and thereby determine the terms on which each family will relate to the other, as well as establishing specific responsibilities, obligations, patterns of inheritance, and so on. As in the cases presented by Comaroff and Roberts (1977), these measures are often (though not always) taken only when the original relationship has ‘ended’ – whether because one of the partners has passed away, or because the couple has otherwise parted – such that the nature of the relationship only becomes completely clear after its termination. The permanent association of two families, then, is delinked from a specific relationship between two partners, and achieved instead through a process of negotiation. The respective families of an unmarried couple that parted after a long-term, serious relationship may, in fact, enjoy closer and more lasting relations than either family allows with the new partners of their offspring (especially where children are involved). The persistence of this negotiated link, of course, ensures that the original relationship does not end in the sense of all ties being cut; each partner remains connected to the other through connections established among their kin. As a Canadian friend remarked in frustration to me: “In Botswana, relationships never seem to *end*.”

Kagiso’s and Moagi’s experiences make clear that marriage and the negotiations it requires are not simply matters of routine; nor are they simply about the mutual suitability of given partners, or the advantage to be gained from a given alliance. They risk forcing long-standing, unresolved issues from the past out of suspension

and back into play: whether between a potential spouse's own parents, or between the parents' respective kin. They risk rendering the relationship's ambiguities recognisable again, often uncomfortably so, and to a generation for whom they were previously unknown. Fresh marriage negotiations hold out perhaps the only hope of resolving these long-standing issues, but in practice often exacerbate them. Thus, for example, were Tsepho to get married – as her grandfather Dipuo reminded her at the outset of the chapter – the payment of *lobola* from her marriage would go to her grandfather, and effectively formalise her parents' marriage, thereby resolving the suspended questions of their status, their respective responsibilities, their children's inheritances and so on. Ideally, the sharing out of Tsepho's *lobola* among her mother's family would serve to reconcile them among themselves, and with her father and his family; and would recognise a certain separation or independence in Tsepho's family as well (remember the connotations of *kgaoganya* – as sharing, separating, and resolving – discussed in Chapter Two). At the same time, should delays or disputes about the payment of that *lobola* open up between Tsepho's future husband's family, her parents and her mother's parents, the confusion of stakeholders and proliferation of claims could well destabilise relationships even further, and derail the marriage altogether. Such delays and disputes are common, and have been historically so (Gulbrandsen 1986; Schapera 1940: 82-92). Certainly, the inability of Tsepho's father and his kin to successfully negotiate the *dikgang* of his own 'marriage' without the intervention of his daughter's marriage would also render his capacity to cope with *dikgang* suspect, thereby further undermining his position. Had Kagiso pushed his marriage negotiations with his girlfriend's maternal kin, responsibility for the girl's custody and care might have been more clearly defined, and the causes of animosity between her maternal and paternal kin articulated and resolved. At the same time, if – as seems likely – the issues at the heart of Kagiso's potential in-laws' mutual avoidance were deeply irreconcilable, pushing his case could have forced an irreparable rupture between the girl and her family, and might have permanently foreclosed the possibility of marriage besides. Just as marriage holds out the possibility of reproducing kinship, then, it holds out the near-certainty of reproducing *dikgang* as well.

The possibility of marriage, then, brings the tensions, conflicts, negotiations and disagreements of foregoing generations back into social relief, pushing them into a new cycle of engagement and irresolution. And further ambiguities proliferate in their wake. Beyond the oft-cited pressures of expense, or trends in men's and women's adaptive strategies (Gulbrandsen 1986), it is perhaps the difficulty of addressing these long-standing, suspended issues *as well as* arriving at mutually satisfactory agreements within and between marrying families that renders marriage so fraught and difficult to achieve in contemporary Botswana. And yet, marriage is perhaps the only process that offers the structural possibility or hope of resolving the suspended *dikgang* of the past, while enabling the extension and reproduction of kinship into the future – producing something of a catch-22 for Tswana families.

Kagiso was ultimately successful in negotiating a marriage several months after I left the field – perhaps a year and a half after his previous attempt. I had met the wife-to-be a few times when she was spending time with Kagiso at his shop, though usually she stayed in his car and was at pains to avoid anything but the most basic greeting. Kagiso's apparent desire to marry at all costs, whether this girl or that, struck me as somewhat disingenuous – until I saw it as part of a larger project, following on from his work and business ownership, of becoming a man. As we saw in Chapter Two, young women – especially potential partners – may attribute manhood primarily in terms of access to resources, generosity, and the ability to provide care. However, these capacities are only partly sufficient for a young man's kin, neighbours, or elders to regard him fully as a man. Historically, unmarried men could attend, but not participate in, the hearing of cases at *kgotla* (customary court) – a practice which still holds in many places today (Gulbrandsen 1986: 12,15; Schapera 1938: 110). Unmarried men cannot assist in the marriage negotiations of offspring, nieces or nephews, or any other serious negotiations involving families outside their own. Initiation is described explicitly in terms of making a man marriageable (as we will see in Chapter Five; Schapera 1933: 64). In Setswana, a man marries (*o a nyala*), whereas a woman is married (*o a nyalwa*); and in asserting that relative agency, an important measure of social and political personhood is conferred that goes beyond his ability to accumulate and provide resources (cf. Gulbrandsen 1986: 15). I suggest

that such recognition comes in part as a result of a man's proven ability to mobilise his own kin in negotiating connections with another kinship network; and as a result of the pronounced, perpetual – we might even say chronic – acquisition of *dikgang* that involves. To use the terms introduced above, his willingness and success in negotiation requires of and confers on him a public recognition that his generous expenditures of money cannot. The success in negotiation a man proves by securing his marriage, and the continued responsibility for further negotiations he will bear as a married man, establish his suitability to participate in other public forms of negotiation – whether they be additional marriage arrangements or the hearing of cases at *kgotla*.

All that remained in Kagiso's trajectory of attaining this sought-after status were the ceremonies: at the District Commissioner's hall, at the church, and at the two families' natal homes. After the initial negotiations with his second girlfriend's family, she still lived in her own rented house in the village, but I heard she had become warm and friendly with the family at home, regularly visiting in the afternoons and often coming to stay with Kagiso at night. The expense and logistical entailments of the ceremonies meant that they would be some time in coming; dates a year and longer after the initial negotiation were being considered. As we will see in more detail in Chapter Five, such major public ceremonies are themselves rife with *dikgang*, in no small part because of the maximum scrutiny they invite: each event requires further negotiations between the families and within each extended family, on issues ranging from dates to speeches and programmes, from contributions to dress and gifts. However, the two families' successful management of the initial marriage negotiations lay the groundwork for successful joint responses to future issues – the critical factor in maintaining continuously adaptive kinship bonds in the context of inevitable crisis. Indeed, I would suggest that it is this proven capacity to share and jointly negotiate inevitable *dikgang* that gives affinal kinship such persistence that – as the proverb which opened this section suggests – it does not decay, even if the married spouses themselves part.

How do these fraught dynamics of recognition, the *dikgang* they generate, and the legacies of both for the reproduction and intergenerational reckonings of kinship or the assertion of personhood play out in the context of AIDS? In the next section, I question whether AIDS presents a new or familiar sort of risk to Botswana, and whether the epidemic has changed what is at stake in intimate relationships.

Reproducing Kinship in a Time of AIDS

“*And...she’s pregnant.*”

Lorato and I sat in shock for a few moments. It had taken some time to eke this information out of her; she’d refused to tell me anything on the phone, other than that our mutual friend Tumi was in hospital. Even once I’d picked her up from work, late in the afternoon, she had been circumspect. But gradually, as we sat in the dusty hospital parking lot waiting for visiting hours to begin, the story emerged.

Tumi had been found by her cousin Lesedi, another old friend we knew in common, in the middle of the night, having collapsed in the hallway of the house they shared. She had been weak and sick for some time, and had lost weight. She had had episodes where she talked nonsense. Lesedi had called the day previous, asking to use Lorato’s postbox address in order to access a good hospital near us that would be less crowded than those in the city.

The signs were straightforward enough, and saved articulating the painfully obvious. Apparently Tumi herself had known for some time that she was HIV-positive; but it was only the midnight collapse, subsequent trip to the hospital, and routine test that had brought the fact to the knowledge of her cousin – in spite of the fact they lived together. The pregnancy was an added surprise to everyone, Tumi included.

As we sat waiting in the car, we saw Lesedi approaching, looking drained and overwhelmed. She explained that we couldn’t go in to see Tumi herself – she was in

treatment for tuberculosis, meaning she could have two regular visitors only and see no-one else. And she was exhausted, and had just gone back to sleep. We decided to walk Lesedi back into the hospital, and sit with her awhile on the long benches lining the small courtyard of the maternity ward. Around us, women at various stages of pregnancy lounged about in bathrobes, their hair wrapped in scarves, chatting with visiting family members. Lesedi sat down heavily and took in the scene with a flat expression, the usual glint of mischief gone from her eyes.

The last time I had seen Tumi had been at a family wedding some months before. Even then I hadn't seen her much, as she had come to town with a new boyfriend and was reluctant to bring him into the yard. A long-term relationship with a man from eastern Africa had ended dramatically not long beforehand, upon her discovery of photo albums stashed under the bed recording his marriage to a woman in his home village. By all accounts she was enthusiastic, hopeful and happy with the new relationship, and altogether smitten besides.

On the hard hospital benches, now, Lesedi began to tell a different story. Tumi had met this new fellow at the clinic in which she worked, and at which he was a regular client. They had begun seeing each other. He talked of the untimely loss of his first wife. He spoke about marriage. And when the clinic doctor sent Tumi's workmate a text message, asking her to warn Tumi that she was getting involved with a man who was HIV-positive, she was too much in love to care. ("Or maybe the workmate didn't tell her well in time?" Lorato suggested. "People can be jealous like that." Lesedi shrugged. "*Gareitse*," she said. "It's possible. I think she just loved the idea of getting married. You know, what girl doesn't want that?")

The doctor had disclosed more than his patient's status – which Tumi, working at the clinic's registration desk, would probably have been able to see from his file in any case. He had explained that the man's first wife had died of AIDS, and that the man himself had nearly died as well. The doctor surmised that the man carried a particularly virulent strain of HIV, and said as much in his text to Tumi's colleague.

Roughly three months later Tumi had discovered she, too, was HIV-positive. She mentioned it to no-one but her new boyfriend, who quickly began to withdraw. Lesedi felt that the stress of the situation was what had begun to take its toll on Tumi, making it impossible for her to cope with the combined effects of the virus and – as was now apparent – a pregnancy to boot.

“Where is this guy now?” I asked. The situation infuriated me: the man’s duplicity, Tumi’s willingness to trust him, the illness, the baby, the shockwaves sent through everyone else’s lives; his convenient absence; the impotence of anyone to do anything about any of it. Lesedi shrugged again. She wasn’t sure if Tumi was still in touch with him, but suspected she was. He hadn’t shown his face. Besides Lesedi, the only other regular visitor Tumi had was the married man she had been with before.

We sat in silence awhile, punctuated only by the occasional “*Mxm!*” a sharp teeth-sucking sound of annoyance and derision. We watched the round, bathrobed women basking in the sun. Two camouflaged soldiers walked past, in their high, polished boots, entirely out of place. Our collective disgruntlement latched on to them as they passed. “Ah! Men are useless,” said Lesedi. “Imagine. What kind of person can do that?” We fell quiet, each thinking of the number of men we knew who had abandoned women to their pregnancies; and the number of women we knew whose pregnancies had helped them secure some relationships and end others. It didn’t always involve life-threatening illness, but we all knew plenty of people, men and women, who could do similar things in similar circumstances.

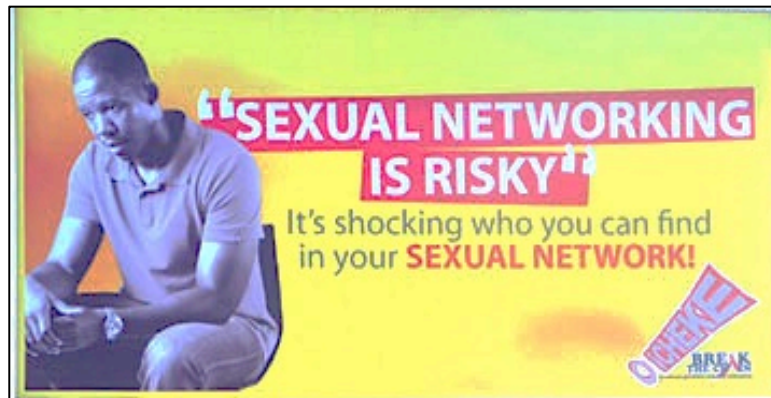
Lesedi and Tumi were both from the far north-east corner of the country, a day’s drive away. They stayed with Lesedi’s seven-year-old daughter and two other cousins in a spacious, three-room house in one of the new neighbourhoods springing up around the capital, spanned by rutted, unpaved roads and uncannily convenient to a profusion of malls. They went home infrequently, though always for major holidays and events. The grandmother who had raised them was diabetic and increasingly frail. Tumi’s mother had long struggled with an illness that nobody

named. Lesedi had built a roomy house in their natal yard, but both women felt that there was little left for them there, and that the obligations of life at home were too constricting.

With an expression of surprised guilt, Lesedi admitted she had been thinking about asking her cousin to move out. She felt that her cousin had not been contributing enough at home, and she was overwhelmed with the demands of her own university schooling and caring for her child. Of course she could not ask such a thing now; but knowledge of her responsibility for the additional care Tumi would require in the coming weeks and months showed in the strain on her face. I asked her whether she planned to tell her grandmother at least – knowing that in such a situation, the elderly woman would be certain to come down to help. Lesedi hung her head and shook it slowly. “I don’t think so,” she said. “*Kana* she’s old, it can kill her. I’ll just tell them about the pregnancy, it’s already enough.”

Lesedi’s explanation of what I at first took to be Tumi’s rashness in this episode resonated with many others I heard in comparable scenarios. Any time I became exasperated with someone for putting themselves (so I imagined) in pronounced danger of contracting HIV— with inevitable consequences for everyone involved – I was met with similar explanations: a shrug, and an acknowledgment that the promise of love, of marriage, or of a child had made sense of the risk (compare van Dijk’s [2010] account of discourses describing marriage as a *panacea* for AIDS). The *dikgang* that surround those three goals in usual circumstances, with far-reaching consequences of their own, put this reaction in context: HIV becomes *one of many* risks to be borne in the crucial life projects of making family and making the self, and one of many potential crises to be faced in that process. It is a risk people are willing to take in order to achieve intimacy, and the promise of marriage, extended networks of kin, and personhood that intimacy brings; and in this sense, is a risk of the same order as others we have considered above. This contextualisation also goes some distance in explaining the disconnect between widespread understanding of the causes and repercussions of the disease, and the nevertheless persistently high rates

of infection among Batswana (see Introduction). Batswana do not contract HIV out of ignorance or wilful self-harm, nor out of a lack of concern for the future, nor an inability to practice or negotiate safe sex (as public health and social welfare programming often assumes); they take the risk of contraction, alongside



all the other risks discussed above, as part and parcel of intimate relationships with the potential to produce and reproduce kinship and personhood. All of these potential *dikgang* affect individuals and their families, who must work to ameliorate them on a regular (sometimes daily) basis, with greater and lesser success, producing an inevitable legacy of further risks and difficulties – further *dikgang* – in their turn.

Indeed, even practices that seem to offer little more than an egregious danger of infection – like maintaining multiple partners, for example, as Batswana commonly do – might be understood to *ameliorate* the other risks inherent in intimate relationships. Fred Klaits (2010) notes that men in the church he studied kept multiple partners “in order to ‘protect themselves’ (*go itshireletsa*), ironically the same phrase used in health campaigns to promote condoms” (2010: 131). Klaits links this ‘protection’ to a sort of distribution of love that ensures one’s emotional well-being and eventual return on one’s investments of material resources in others. Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) might have linked it to maintaining a partible, fragmented, and concealed self that avoids the vulnerability of being known. Either way, it is decisively linked to recognisability, the *dikgang* that may be generated, and the indeterminacies of relationships navigating those processes. And it suggests that protection against these relational indeterminacies is as important as – or *more* important than – protection against the virus.

Of course, to say the risk of contracting HIV is of the same order as other *dikgang* in intimate relationships is not to say that the stakes are the same. The stakes around HIV infection are unquestionably higher; in many ways the epidemic pathologises the risks we have identified above, potentially turning them into questions of life and death. And yet, I would argue that it is not only the question of (biological) life and death with which Batswana are preoccupied, or with which they primarily associate the stakes of infection. Another possibility becomes clear when we return to the questions of recognition and *dikgang* on which this chapter has focused.

In some sense – as Tumi’s situation above demonstrates – AIDS becomes recognisable in a woman’s body in the same ways as pregnancy: gradually, over a period of several months. And as Lesedi’s reflections indicate, it provokes some of the same responses and repercussions: it signals the potential existence of a relationship, without incontrovertibly identifying the man involved; and it falls to the woman’s natal family above all to negotiate the crisis, reasserting her connection to them. I knew young women who returned home to their natal yards to be nursed at advanced stages of illness, much as they might return to give birth and be confined. And nursing, or intimate, continuous care was a primary means through which the family could address the *kgang* of illness and seek to contain it. Friends often noted that death after a long illness at home was preferable to sudden death, because it offered the opportunity for family to nurse the stricken person, and thereby discharge the responsibilities still owed through contributions of care. Like pregnancy and birth, then, AIDS might be seen primarily to reproduce a person’s relationships to their her natal kin.

But critical differences lie in *what* is recognised, in the options available for managing the *dikgang* that arise, and in the legacies of those negotiations. Thus, as we saw throughout Tumi’s story, it is recognition of the *disease itself* that dominates; the specific relationship through which it was transmitted, and Tumi as a person, both recede from view by comparison. And this differential recognition draws in turn upon what the disease makes recognisable: specifically, mortality and the threat of death. What is recognised in AIDS, then, stands in stark contrast to what is

recognised in pregnancy: the potential of life. The conceptual distance between recognising AIDS and recognising relationships or persons is underscored by Tumi's willingness to overlook her boyfriend's status; just as the dominance of the disease in the clinic staff's ways of seeing and knowing the boyfriend, his past marriage, and Tumi's relationship with him underscore the violent priority of recognition that AIDS claims.

The recognisability of AIDS, in turn, produces rather different *dikgang* than the recognisability of intimate relationships. First and foremost, it throws into question the capacity of both the individual to care for herself, and of her family to care for her. As Klaitz (2010) argues convincingly, AIDS is hard to talk about because it enhances scrutiny around and "frequently amounts to critical commentaries on caregiving relationships" (2010: 33). In a similar vein, Julie Livingston (2007) notes that the care required for debility renders differences among kin problematically visible, and that "relationships undergo both public and private scrutiny" (2007: 3). Unlike pregnancy and birth, AIDS involves a recognition that does not produce a new way of relating to one's natal kin, but re-asserts old patterns of dependency on parents (especially mothers or elder sisters); and it simultaneously undermines those relationships and calls them into question. Causes and ways of addressing the *kgang* that AIDS represents are conflated; and opportunities to remake the self in the context of family are cut off.

More than this, negotiating the *kgang* of AIDS cannot extend kinship nor enable self-making in the ways we have explored above. AIDS cannot be officially reported to or negotiated with a partner or their kin; charges cannot be levied; and others cannot be held responsible for transmission of the virus. To the extent that new relationships cannot be negotiated, nor new risks acquired and managed through those negotiations, means of self-making through these avenues are also foreclosed. And finally – like pregnancy and marriage negotiations – the intergenerational failings of a family to navigate *dikgang* are thrown into relief by AIDS. Unlike either sort of negotiation (and especially unlike marriage), however, the structural possibility or hope of addressing those failings is foreshortened. The heightened stakes presented

by AIDS, in other words, are not simply life-and-death stakes; they are, perhaps more importantly, stakes of kin-making and self-making in which key means of achieving both are truncated. Small wonder, then, that Lesedi would choose to notify her grandmother about Tumi's pregnancy – a *kgang* about which something constructive could be done, both in terms of Tumi's continued self-making and in terms of her relationships with her family – but not about her HIV-positive status, the care responsibilities for which Lesedi undertook on her own.

Conclusion

Dipuo's reflections on the perplexities of negotiating contemporary marriage at the outset of the chapter – *Re bona dilo*, we are seeing things – aptly summarise what I have suggested is the central *kgang* of intimate relationships among the Tswana: the management of recognition. 'Seeing things', whether a pregnancy or a serious relationship moving towards marriage, poses a problem to be negotiated within and between families; and that problem, in turn, presents a unique opportunity to extend kinship and make the self. These opportunities differ in their form and implications for men and women, and are highly fraught – in part because they also play important roles in addressing long-standing *dikgang* among prior generations. Rather than disruptions in kinship practice that suggest significant social change or breakdown (like premarital pregnancy in the colonial era, Schapera 1933; see also Comaroff & Roberts 1977; Griffiths 1997; Gulbrandsen 1986; van Dijk 2010, 2012), then, the disputes or *dikgang* that commonly arise in Tswana pregnancy and marriage are critical factors in creating Tswana kinship and securing its adaptive continuity.

Dipuo's framing also suggests that 'things' are now being seen in ways they shouldn't – a suggestive comment for the problematic recognisabilities of illness and mortality that can emerge from intimate relationships in a time of AIDS. As we have seen, HIV/AIDS fits surprisingly well into the continuum of *dikgang* long associated with intimate relationships among the Tswana – a concordance that may go some

way in explaining both its uncommonly high prevalence and its persistence across decades, in spite of extensive treatment, prevention, and behaviour change campaigns. While the repercussions of AIDS for managing intimate relationships are considerable, they also demonstrate continuity with long-standing imperatives of negotiating the *dikgang* around recognition; indeed, the latter seem to take priority. And while HIV/AIDS *may* truncate opportunities to extend kinship between families and to self-make in that way, it does not necessarily disrupt relationships within natal families – especially given that cycles of *dikgang* around care at home are so common. Contrary to much of the literature on the topic discussed at the outset of this chapter, then, disputes in pregnancy and marriage may actually mark crucial continuities in practices of kin- and self-making, as much as disruption or change.

In the next chapter, I move from a consideration of pregnancy and marriage to the care of children – and specifically, their circulation among kin. The circulation of children among a wide range of kin is often understood as a prime means of binding families together; but as with other sorts of kin-making practice, child circulation in Botswana attracts *dikgang*. Indeed, to the extent it enacts the geographies of kinship explored in Chapter One, the dynamics of care and contribution explored in Chapter Two, and the recognition of particular kin relations and responsibilities seen above, it draws *dikgang* associated with all three. However, attention to the ways these *dikgang* are managed suggests that child circulation is an important means of defining the *limits* of family, as well as distinguishing and reproducing relative closeness and distance among kin – or between kin and non-kin. Government-led formal foster care initiatives, conversely, muddy and conflate these distinctions, creating problematic repercussions for natal and fostering families alike. It is to these considerations that I turn next.

Chapter Four

“They Were Far Family”: Circulating Children, Differentiating Kin

Go lemala ganamane ke go lala le mma yo.

The way to spoil a calf is to let it sleep with its mother.

“My aunt wanted somebody to go and stay with her in the city, one of the girls, so that she helps to educate her, pay for each and every thing...”. Lesedi trailed off, looking wistful and laughing at herself a little. “It’s a kind of funny story,” she started over, and then hesitated, laughing uneasily again.

Lesedi and I sat in the University of Botswana library, where I’d found her studying for her exams. After updating me on her cousin Tumi’s condition – Tumi had finally been allowed to leave the hospital and return to their shared house – Lesedi had fallen to reminiscing about their shared childhood. Her usually bright, direct gaze had taken on a far-off, inward-looking quality.

Lesedi and Tumi had grown up in the same yard, with their grandmother, Tumi’s mother, and three other cousins. Lesedi’s mother was still alive then, moving back and forth across the nearby borders with Zimbabwe and South Africa to buy and resell clothes. She was infrequently at home, though she visited from time to time. Another aunt stayed in a nearby city. “My aunt at home, Tumi’s mom, was not working,” Lesedi explained. “Well, my mother was also not working at the time, not really” – income from itinerant selling was hardly reliable – “so it wasn’t just about that,” she said, piecing the situation together with some caution and uncertainty.

“My aunt in the city was the first person at home to work, and help my grandmother,” she explained, having finally settled on a way of framing the tale. “My uncles were all working but they were married and looking after their wives. My aunt wanted one of us to go to stay with her, because she had a baby also, she wanted somebody to go and look after her boy, and also to go to school.”

“At the time we were suffering, you know, we were just staying at the lands.” She laughed again, with a hint of embarrassment. “None of us had shoes or anything at that time, we would just go to school without shoes. So my aunt told us she was only going to take someone who had shoes. We had to go and ask for shoes from somebody, the neighbours or whoever. I went to the neighbours’ place, there was one girl who was my age, so I asked to borrow her shoes. And she agreed. So I said, ‘OK, it’s fine, I’ll come in the morning to take them.’”

“In the morning I overslept,” she said, chuckling at her own renowned laziness. “But I told Tumi the story, that I asked for shoes from the girl next door. So Tumi, early in the morning, she went there to take the shoes...! Hey, Tumi was clever, you know? She took the shoes that were supposed to be mine.” When their aunt arrived in the yard that morning and found Tumi wearing shoes, she took the girl to live with her in the city.

“But Tumi grew up, my aunt really helped her,” Lesedi added, becoming reflective. Her aunt’s intervention had marked a profound shift of circumstances for Tumi. Having left her mother at home in the village, Tumi had moved to stay with the girls’ aunt in the city, and had thereafter been raised there. She’d had the advantages of city schooling, of the food and clothes and comfort that her aunt, working a well-paid job, could provide. Like the rest of their extended family, Tumi visited her home village at Christmas and during other holidays; she and Lesedi remained close. But she had few friends or acquaintances there, marking the extent to which the city had become her gravitational centre. Given the apparently arbitrary nature of the original decision to take Tumi, Lesedi’s taciturn way of relating the story took on a new clarity: such comparative advantage could easily have been a source of jealousy and bad feeling between her and her cousin. But Lesedi was carefully ungrudging. “I was a little bit clever, I could manage to pass even when no-one was interested in education at home. But Tumi might have struggled. Now you see her here, working. My aunt helped her.”

In this chapter, I explore Tswana practices of child circulation, and their relevance in differentiating degrees of relatedness across Tswana kin networks. Being called or sent to stay with a wide variety of relatives, or taking them in and looking after them, are crucial and common experiences of kinship for Batswana. For children and young people, living with grandparents, aunts and uncles, and a varied range of more distant relatives, caring for and being cared for by them, constitutes a formative exposure to the people and relationships that make up their extended families. Indeed, it makes them kin. But more than simply mobilising relationships of care and thereby strengthening bonds between kin, I argue that child circulation plays an important role in differentiating kin (Wagner 1977); in establishing and continuously reproducing degrees of relational nearness and distance; and ultimately in setting limits on relatedness. Moreover, it inserts individual children in specific relationships within these networks, partly informed by existing relationships and partly able to be defined by the child herself. Like other tensions discussed throughout this thesis, the tension between sustaining mutual responsibilities of care across extended family networks, while simultaneously ensuring that those networks are carefully distinguished and do not collapse in upon themselves, produces and is made legible in *dikgang* – or conflicts and processes of irresolution. And, as in those other examples, parallel tensions between effectively sustaining those networks while leaving space for *go itirela*, or self-making, exacerbate these *dikgang*. At the same time, child circulation – as both a cause of and solution to familial *dikgang* – is a critical object of concern in assessing and addressing the repercussions of the AIDS epidemic. Among governmental and non-governmental organisations, it is simultaneously considered the ‘traditional’ practice best-positioned to compensate for the supposedly widespread loss of parents and the ensuing ‘orphan crisis’; it is feared to be breaking down under the twin pressures of modernisation and disease; and it is viewed with suspicion as a practice that renders children prone to neglect and abuse. A formal fostering alternative has been articulated in law and piloted in practice, but has failed in spite of a widespread sense of its necessity among social work professionals. In this context, child circulation is an especially useful lens through which to consider Tswana kinship, and the effects of AIDS and the institutional interventions that have emerged in its wake.

I have chosen to frame this chapter in terms of ‘child circulation’ – “the relocation of a child or young person into a new household for locally meaningful reasons” (Fonseca 1986; Leinaweaver 2007a: 164) – rather than ‘fostering’, or even ‘parenting’, for several reasons. Perhaps most usefully, the term leaves the question of agency open (Leinaweaver 2007b), making room for ways that children circulate themselves as well as ways they are circulated by kin and agencies alike. It gives a sense of movement appropriate to the Tswana experience and management of kin spatialities and associated dangers (Chapter One); and it emphasises both the highly transitory nature of children’s residential patterns (Leinaweaver 2007a: 164) and a perpetual, cyclical element to them, rendering an apt sense of the simultaneously interrupted and continuous temporality of the practice. It also helpfully avoids assumptions about practice and affect with which the English terms ‘parenting’ and ‘fostering’ are laden.

Notably, there is no term in Setswana for ‘fostering’ (whether in the sense of taking in the children of kin or non-kin), nor for ‘foster child’ – though practices of asking for, bearing for, giving and taking children, especially among kin but also among neighbours, are widespread and long-standing (Schapera 1940: 246-247; cf. Alber 2004: 32; cf. Ingstadt 2004). Friends whom I asked about this terminological gap explained it simply by saying, “if I am sent a child, that child becomes my child”; and by underscoring the extent to which parenting responsibilities should be shared, and to which children ought to take all of their elders as *batsadi* (parents). However, these same friends took in the children of distant relatives as nannies and maids, treated them rather differently than their own children, called them and were called by them using either the terms of their existing relationship or reference to a ‘real’ parent (‘uncle’, ‘*ngwana wa ga...*’ – ‘child of...’). ‘Parenting’ is therefore an equally problematic framing, for while it connotes critical kin ideals and encompasses a wide variety of caregiving arrangements in ways suitable to the term’s highly-inclusive Setswana usage, it does not facilitate our understanding of the discriminations among them that Batswana routinely make. Of course, there is no term in Setswana for child circulation, either, other than in descriptive phrases (focused on calling, sending, or

taking). However, its relative ethnographic and analytical open-endedness presents fewer pitfalls than other alternatives.

Terminological choices notwithstanding, this chapter proposes arguments in conversation with literature on fostering – much of which describes ethnographically similar practices to child circulation, with some key differences. The bulk of this literature emphasises the role of fostering in creating, strengthening, condensing, or multiplying close kin ties, both between child and foster-parent and between the child's natal and fostering families (Alber 2004; Carsten 1991; Leinaweaver 2007a; Stack 1974: Chapter Five). This interpretive angle has proven productive to the extent it focuses on processes of becoming and transforming kin, and the crucial roles children play in that process (Carsten 1991; Leinaweaver 2007a, 2007b; cf. Goodenough in Goody 1982: 7, in which parenthood is a fixed state to be transacted through different sorts of fosterage). However, almost without exception, it emphasises the ways in which fostering binds and connects kin, or brings them closer together. In this sense, it seems to begin with what Roy Wagner (1977) describes as “the traditional anthropological assumption of the innateness of kin differentiation...[and the] human responsibility to integrate them” (1977: 623). This emphasis on binding together is an intuitive one, and clearly well suited to the ethnographic contexts out of which it is argued. In Tswana practice, however, child circulation is frequently experienced in terms of separating, distancing and exclusion. In this chapter, I look at ways that Tswana child circulation circumscribes the fraught intimacies of kinship, enacting a “moral duty” not to integrate but “to differentiate, and to differentiate properly” (ibid.).

Anthropological work on fostering also shares a concern with what we might call the economies of child circulation, considering it variously in terms of transactions and gifts, sharing and exchange (e.g. Alber 2004; Carsten 1991; Goody, borrowing from Goodenough, 1982: 7; Stack 1974). Janet Carsten (1991), for example, notes that the movement of children among Malays, prefigured by marriage exchanges, “blurs the distinction between sharing and exchange in that it may be interpreted either as exchange between discrete units or as sharing within an expanded unit” (1991: 438).

Certainly the ambiguity between children's capacity to bind and distinguish family units in Carsten's account echoes in Tswana practices of child circulation as well. However, in keeping with the economies of kinship explored in Chapter Two, I suggest that Tswana ideals around child circulation are framed primarily in terms of contributions of care rather than sharing or exchange. Curiously, circulating children both *are* contributions and *make* contributions; they are both objects and agents of care, an anomalous position somewhat overlooked by the models above. Thus, children may be requested from or given by one's siblings, uncles' families, or offspring – people with whom one would otherwise have long-standing contributory relationships – as contributions to the management and completeness of one's household on behalf of those figures. But once moved, the children themselves bear a responsibility to contribute care, including mobilising resources from their natal homes and other sources (like NGOs and government). And, of course, the child's capacity to meet expectations of contribution adequately, the host family's willingness and ability to contribute care to the child in suitable proportion, and the child's natal family's sense of whether their contribution to the host family is being duly met with contributions in turn are all potential points at which *dikgang* emerge.

In Lesedi's brief account above, we begin to see how the practice of circulating children among extended families maps experimental extensions of many of the key practices of kin-making we have explored in earlier chapters: moving, staying, being called and sent among a multiplicity of 'kin spaces' (Chapter One); contributing care, through the provision of things and work attendant upon them, in ways that build mutual obligation as well as personhood (Chapter Two); and even making oneself and one's relationships and capacities (such as being able to mobilise shoes from neighbours) visible and known in ways that ground opportunities *go itirela*, to self-make (Chapter Three). And the management of *dikgang* that emerge in each dimension serves to assess and establish the limits of those extensions, and to assert distinctions: family is segregated into those who contribute effectively, for example, and are therefore close; and those who do not, and are therefore distant.

Below, I pick up with Lesedi where I left off, by way of exploring the spectrum of Tswana child circulation practice, the spectrum of *dikgang* it maps, and the differentiation of ‘near’ from ‘far’ kin it produces. In the sections that follow, I consider two comparatively atypical situations, involving the circulation of children among non-kin: one in which a young man placed himself with the Legaes, a family to which he was unrelated, in response to perceived witchcraft and abuse at home; and one in which a pilot government programme formally removed children from their family and placed them with unrelated ‘foster parents’. Considered exclusively from the perspective of care and kin-making processes, all of these practices might be assumed to represent creative extensions and adaptations of – or at least substitutions for – kinship in times of crisis. However, comparison among these examples with attention to the role of *dikgang* makes clear the critical role that child circulation plays in continuously differentiating specific relational distances among kin, and limiting or containing kinship as well. Moreover, it illustrates continuities in child circulation and parenting practice that extend across the ‘crisis of care’ AIDS is assumed to have created, shedding light on the legacy of governmental and non-governmental interventions conceived in response.

“She Couldn’t Give Me Two Pula”: Staying with Distant Kin

Bosa iphuteng metlhala lotshosa diletseng.

Fail to know your relatives and one day they will turn on you.

(Also: Fail to help your relatives and you won’t receive help when you need it.)

Lesedi eventually had her own experience in being sent to stay with other relatives, like Tumi had – and like almost everyone else I knew in Botswana. Lesedi’s mother passed away while she was a teenager, but that did not affect her living arrangements as such; she remained with her aunt and grandmother, who continued to look after her, until finishing her public schooling at Form Five (the end of high school). Having failed, she had limited opportunities at home – until she was called by relatives living away in the south, in one of the large villages close to the capital.

“They were far relatives,” she explained, “on my grandmother’s side – he was my grandmother’s brother’s son.”⁸ The man’s wife had taken a teaching post in a distant peri-urban village, and they told Lesedi’s grandmother that they wanted to take her to repeat her Form Five by distance learning. On the face of it, it looked very much like the sort of help Tumi had been offered years previously, which gave Lesedi hope. “But it didn’t work like that,” she explained, with a look of resentment. “When I came to stay there they wanted me to be their maid. They didn’t even take me to the school they promised. They wanted somebody to help them, so they just lied that they’ll take me to school.”

She stayed with them for a year and a half. “It was bad...I just had to, to stay there. She couldn’t even give me two pula,” she added, of the wife. At one point, her hosts had even begun muttering about the cost of feeding her, suggesting that her grandmother should be contributing something for her care. The sense of injustice and disappointment in being expected to contribute to a household economy, while having had the contributions promised towards her schooling so drastically curtailed – alongside the opportunities for self-making schooling presented – was still raw in Lesedi’s telling. Like most young people in comparable situations, Lesedi had felt unable to say anything to her host family about the issue or its possible resolution. I asked if she had told her grandmother, through whom the arrangement had originally been made. “I didn’t wanna stress her,” she answered. “I only told her after I left. Because you know how people are – if you tell, tomorrow it’s like you are trying to destroy people’s families or something. So I just stayed. Also it was hard at home. My brother had just started working, and so he was looking after everyone.”

Lesedi had since done quite well for herself. She had eventually put herself through Form Five exam rewrites and passed, and was attending university, which meant she was receiving a substantial stipend from the government. The father of her child

⁸ Because the role can be inherited, this genealogical connection could have made the man in question a *malome* (mother’s brother) to Lesedi’s mother, and by extension to Lesedi. However, the fact that she did not describe him thus suggests that his father might have been a younger (rather than older) brother, or that he did not otherwise take on the special role.

supported them both financially, had bought her a car and built a house for her in her home village, and she was comfortably settled in the capital (see Chapter Three). Partly as a result of this visible success in creating her own home, and partly because she stayed in the city, she had moved into the role her aunt, 'far relatives', and brother had all played: two younger cousins had been sent to stay with her at the time we spoke.

A younger male cousin, who had come to the city to attend agricultural college, was the first to ask to stay at Lesedi's. She agreed to accommodate him on the stipulation that he assist with the care of her school-aged daughter – and accordingly, he often cooked, cleaned the house, and played with or babysat the little girl. However, as his comings and goings became more frequent and unpredictable, and as it became clear that he would be kicked out of school, Lesedi sent for a still-younger female cousin to come and replace him. The girl had failed at Form Three (the end of junior high school), and Lesedi offered to help her repeat her courses in exchange for her help around the house. From her arrival, she prepared all three meals a day, cleaned the house and yard, babysat the little girl, and did anything else she was bidden. She seldom left, except to attend classes or to make the long, occasional trip back to their home village. Lesedi described these arrangements with some frustration, frequently noting the unreliability of both cousins in their housework, and despairing of either making anything of themselves; the parallel between both situations and Lesedi's own, at a similar age, went unremarked.

While the younger cousins looked after the child and the house, Lesedi had taken on primary responsibility for Tumi's care after her return from hospital. It was proving onerous. On a recent trip back to their home village for a wedding, at one of the large family meetings such events produce, Lesedi told me she had made an explicit move to disengage from any further responsibility for relatives coming and going to the capital: "The city is eating us," she said. "I don't want to encourage anyone else to come there. If they do, they should make their own arrangements," she asserted. To a mutual friend, she vowed: "From now on, I just want to think about me and my daughter." But at the same time, she would continue to need help caring for her

daughter; would likely have to take on additional care for Tumi's infant child, and would need help for that child as well. Lesedi may have hoped to escape the cycle of circulating kin, but it seemed unlikely, a matter of needs and obligations beyond her control.

Lesedi's experience describes many of the ways in which children and young people circulate, are called, sent, and taken in in Botswana – as well as charting the process of growing from a circulating child to an adult attempting to manage such circulations, and the inevitable perpetuity that characterises those cycles. As a child, Lesedi's unmarried mother left her *ko gae* – at home – to be cared for by her maternal grandmother and aunt. Having a child meant there was pressure on Lesedi's mother to work; and work meant being away from the village, in this case in a transnationally-mobile manner, buying and selling across the nearby borders of Zimbabwe and South Africa. After her mother's death, like many orphaned children, Lesedi stayed where she had been: with her grandmother. As a teenager at loose ends, she was taken to care for the children of distant relatives in conditions that she experienced as uncomfortably uncaring, like forced labour. And then once she had become a mother and acquired a house herself, Lesedi hosted younger kin schooling in the city, eventually sending for a young cousin from home to assist in the care of her child in exchange for better schooling opportunities – much as Lesedi's aunt had done for Tumi, and her uncle had done for her. Perhaps the only possible sort of circulation she hadn't (yet) undertaken was of sending a child of her own to childless relatives, for company and help, or to relatives who might accommodate the child for schooling or work.

It bears stressing that Lesedi's story is not unusual. Many of the Batswana I knew, girls and boys, men and women alike, had had similar experiences: they were raised predominantly by grandparents, had lived with other kin while working and/or schooling – often in exchange for providing child care – and, as adults, had taken in the children of relatives for various periods of time. And these practices are not new: Mmapula, the grandmother at home, had been raised by her grandmother in the

1950s, and had in turn raised her sister's child (as well as housing several others of her and her husband's extended kin for different periods of time). Lesedi's experience of staying with her 'far' relatives as fraught with unspoken, unresolved conflict and bad feeling – as compared with the relative ease of her relationship with her grandmother, or Tumi's ease with her aunt – is also typical of others I knew. Hers are, in other words, widely shared experiences of kinship in the context of child circulation.

These diverse situations share many of the kin-making processes I have examined thus far. Thus, all cases involve co-residence; free, frequent movement between places of the *gae* (such as the lands or cattlepost); and care-work undertaken in each of those places (Chapter One). They anticipate the contribution of certain resources and labour – especially food, clothing, toiletries and transport, as well as discretionary funds; but also cooking, guidance and discipline, or help with schoolwork, for example – by hosting families. And they anticipate the care contributions of circulated children as well, in raising younger children, looking after the home, and mobilising additional resources (Chapter Two). There are, however, noteworthy distinctions among the sorts of child circulation described above, which I suggest work to define gradients of relatedness, specifically of closeness and distance. Such distinctions are already apparent in the reasons children are circulated, which fall roughly into two categories: the absence of parents (commonly because of work, but also because of illness or death); and the absence of children, specifically children old enough to contribute to the household. And these distinctions are covariant with places to which children are circulated, which again break roughly into *ko gae* (at home) and away. Thus, kin-fostering in the absence of parents is preferentially *ko gae*, ideally with the absent parent's mother or older sisters;⁹

⁹ It is worth remembering – with reference to our examination of the multiplicity of 'kin spaces' in Chapter One – that neither *ko gae* nor 'away' need designate a single, unchanging place, but rather a network of places defined by the staying and movement of kin, and which defines their relationships in turn. Thus, in the story that opened the chapter, we might consider Tumi to have been fostered *ko gae* – though it involved her physically moving to a town at some distance away. The aunt that took Tumi, as yet unmarried, would have considered her mother's (Tumi's

whereas kin-fostering to address the absence of children who can assist in the work of the household is most frequently away, with ‘far relatives’ who are distant to the fostered child’s home both geographically and genealogically. And these distinctions are reinforced and further nuanced in the claims deriving from different fostering relationships. Where Lesedi’s grandmother, for example, could claim the cattle of Lesedi’s *lobola*, or brideprice, no other relatives could; just as Tumi’s *lobola* would go primarily to her grandmother (her mother being unmarried), and not to the aunt that raised her in town (unless the first two had passed away; compare Chapter Three).

But these distinctions are perhaps most evident in the sorts of conflicts that arise, the ways in which they are – and aren’t – addressed, and the people called upon to address them. We have seen, in the preceding chapters, the different ways in which *dikgang* emerge and are addressed among families living together at home. These same conflicts, and the means of addressing them, are more or less common to situations that arise when children are circulated *ko gae* – not least because the child is taken simply to be a child of the household. *Dikgang* arise when children are circulated away from home much as they do *ko gae* – and often around similar issues (especially food, money, and work – which is to say, care). However, in these situations they are seldom engaged as outright conflict, nor are they addressed within the yard. Instead, they are expressed through, and referred for resolution back to, the family from which the young person was sent in the first place. Thus, Lesedi would not have considered raising her concerns directly with her hosting family – only her grandmother, who sent her, would have been an appropriate audience. Within the hosting yard, these conflicts are muffled in silence: fostering adults do not express their concerns directly, and circulated children are expected to hold their tongues respectfully. A grudge-like atmosphere emerges. As at the child’s natal home, conflict mediation is routed through an appropriate third party; but unlike at home, this mediator is not co-resident, and is seldom called into a face-to-face discussion, in which each party’s available responses are clear. The result of this scenario is

grandmother’s) yard *ko gae*, just as Tumi would. Lesedi’s ‘far’ relatives, on the other hand, most likely would have identified with an altogether different place as *ko gae*.

frequently deadlock. Having not been witness to the causes of conflict, and having no means of hearing the story from both sides, the family *ko gae* does not weigh or attempt to establish the comparative truth of each tale, nor pronounce judgment. They are, essentially, unable to mediate. Most often they will counsel their child simply to be respectful and do as she is told; and if the issue persists and seems impossible to resolve, they will simply summon the child home, without further discussion with the hosting family.

Lesedi's earlier comment about the risk of telling her grandmother about her poor treatment at the hands of her 'far relatives' – for fear she might be accused of 'destroying someone's family' – is telling in understanding this dynamic. The family she risks destroying by speaking ill of their conduct is not her extended family, nor her natal family, but the family that has taken her in. Like any kin who live together, she is a potential threat; and speech, especially the articulation of discord (or *puo*), is one of the most potent means of actualising that threat. In this case, the threat she poses is best contained by exclusion and distance, not increased intimacy, nor the provision of care, nor the resolution of conflict.

To the extent that the 'far', hosting family in a scenario like Lesedi's does not engage in inevitable *dikgang* the way her family *ko gae* might, they are distanced from her; they do not, and cannot, become replacement natal kin. This distancing reflects their distance from other members of her natal family, and in this sense reproduces the 'farness' of their genealogical relatedness. By referring the conflict at hand, and its resolution, back to the natal kin, the latter's unique capacity to engage and resolve conflict is emphasised – reproducing the nearness of their relatedness to the sent-out child.

When asked to map out her family however she saw fit, including and excluding whomever she liked, Lesedi did not include the family that hosted her; nor did she include them among the broad range of people who had raised her. Staying with them, caring for their children, and ultimately coming into unresolved conflict with them did not bring her closer to them; it clarified their distance, and reasserted their

position as ‘far relatives’. In a similar exercise, Tumi listed the aunt who took her to be raised in the city as kin; but did not give her any particular priority, certainly not above her own grandmother and mother. She acknowledged the help she had received from her aunt, but the time spent with her did not change their relationship so much as reaffirm it. Child circulation among kin, then, works not to tighten bonds of kinship, nor even to transform those bonds (cf. Carsten 1991), but to assert appropriate degrees of closeness and distance between kin, and to reproduce these differentiations across generations. Circulated children come to know their relatives and apposite ways of relating to them that ensure help in times of need, while containing the danger – suggested in the proverb above – that misreading their comparative likeliness to help might produce.

But what about child circulation – undertaken either informally or formally – with non-kin? Does it serve to create a sort of replacement or substitute kinship where kin-circulation does not? What practices of care, conflict, and resolution does it involve, and how does it compare to kin-circulating practice? In the next two sections, I consider these questions with reference to the case of a young man who brought himself to stay with us at home during my fieldwork; and the case of Botswana’s first – and only – formal placement of children with a trained foster parent.

“Living Outside”: Staying with Non-Kin

Ngwana e o sa lelang o swela tharing.

The child who does not cry dies in its carrying-skin.

Arriving home one twilit evening, I found an unfamiliar young man in the sitting room. I had been trading loud greetings over my shoulder with others in the yard, and was startled to find him glowering up at me from a shadowy corner of the couch. I greeted him; he looked away without response. I passed through into the kitchen to

put the kettle on, and when I returned I found him unmoved: leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, he clutched a book and stared into a dark corner of the room.

I went out into the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, and asked Modiri surreptitiously who the young man was. He shrugged, and said the boy was waiting for Kagiso.

Later that night, as we sat out in the *lelwapa* after dinner, I noticed Kagiso's voice in the house. The lights had been turned on in the sitting room, giving it a pale blue glow through the window. The door was closed. I asked again what was happening, and Kelebogile explained that the young man attended church with them, and had come to ask help from Kagiso – their sometime preacher – because his family was bewitching him. They were enclosed together in the sitting room praying intently, and stayed that way until long after I had gone to bed.

The next morning, I was surprised to see the same young man, now in school uniform, drinking his morning tea by the fire.

I didn't learn the young man's name for almost two weeks. He and I circled around each other warily, each of us equally confused by the presence of the other. We seldom spoke, unsure how to take one another or what to say. I would sometimes go for days without seeing him, and he seemed to come and go freely; but a great stack of his school papers and books had appeared on the bookshelf in Kagiso's room, where he slept. I heard from the younger cousins in the yard that Kagiso had gone to visit the boy's family to tell them where he was, and had visited the social worker and the school to make similar reports and examine other options (of which apparently there were none). There the matter rested.

His name was Bonolo. He had been staying with us for eight months before I asked to sit down with him and hear his whole story. During that time he had integrated more or less seamlessly at home. He seemed to have acquired chores of his own almost immediately, including starting the fire in the morning, sweeping, and occasionally doing dishes; and he often went out to the cattlepost at weekends to help

with the heavy work of finding, herding and feeding the dispersed herd. He spent many of his weeknights at Kagiso's shop, helping out and passing the time with the younger cousins who worked there. His clothes were mostly hand-me-downs from both Kagiso and Tuelo, and he was served and ate at home with everyone else. He was well-liked by the children of the yard, and became close to them, spending much of his time at home in their company.

But there were subtle limits to his integration, too. Unlike the other young people of the house, for example, I didn't feel I could send him for things, or ask for his help. Other adults in the house seldom sent him for anything, though he would often volunteer to go with one of the other boys when they were sent. The chores he had taken on – at home, at the cattlepost, at the shop – were almost all voluntary; I never saw him asked to undertake any specific tasks, nor scolded for neglecting any, though he might be invited along on things by the men. And his relationships with the adults in the yard seemed to remain aloof. While he would sometimes seek help with homework, or engage in lively debate around various Christian precepts, he did not seek the adults out for advice or attach to any of them particularly. And they in turn remained aloof from him, avoiding inquiry into his background or life. Kagiso – who was running three small businesses, working as a full-time driver, and conducting a clandestine courtship – was seldom home or otherwise available; and while Bonolo clearly took him as a sort of mentor, their connection did not seem to run much more deeply than that.

As fond and companionable as they were with him, none of the family members – not even the children – referred to Bonolo using kin terms, either. Occasionally family members teasingly referred to Bonolo as *ngwana wa ga Kagiso*, Kagiso's child; but these comments were used in humourous banter among the women, seldom made in front of Kagiso, and I never heard Bonolo called in that way to his face. Kagiso, moreover, was never called *Rra Bonolo* (father of Bonolo), even in jest. The clearest comparison was with the foundling calf that Modiri had brought back from the cattlepost (Chapter Two). In this sense the commentary seemed to be more about playfully recognising a hitherto unexpected potential to provide care in both

men, without asserting any real sort of obligation or relatedness. Indeed, the commentary was perhaps more about the fact that neither man had children of their own, while expressing hope that one day they might.

While there had been occasional meetings between Kagiso and his parents, Mmapula and Dipuo, about Bonolo's situation, these had never involved the rest of us; we heard of them as if by rumour, long after the fact. (As Bonolo pointed out to me, these meetings never involved him, either.) Barring Tsepho, who was Bonolo's agetate and former classmate, none of us had any real idea about Bonolo's circumstances. We speculated and swapped overheard snippets freely, among ourselves; but nobody asked.

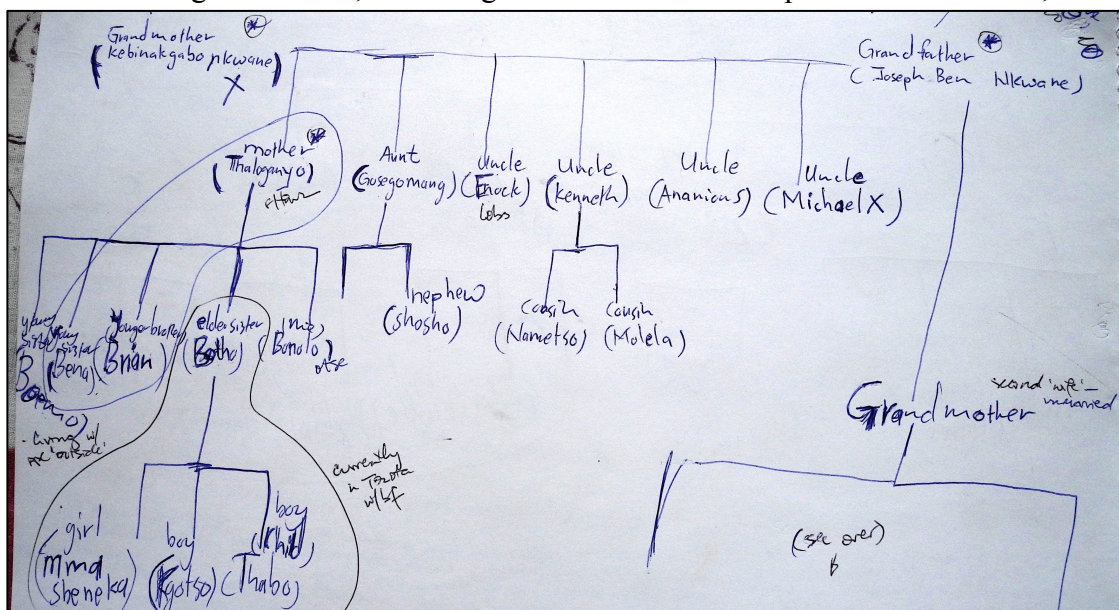
Bonolo had a sort of slow, intense, noncommittal gaze when he was listening that almost inevitably dissolved into an affable, indiscriminate smile when he spoke – whether he spoke of happy things, or frustrations and upsets, or things to which he took exception. So I was uncertain how he actually felt about the notion of being interviewed, or about anything else, for that matter. But he was insistent that people should know his story, and even that I should use his name. In fact, he insisted on writing his entire story out, longhand, before we began talking.

The story, written in English in a confident, broad hand, traced his movements among all the places he had been raised. Having spent time initially in a small town in the south-east, he moved to Kasane, on the northern border of Botswana, to begin schooling; stayed there several years, before moving to our village for a year; and then moved on to Gantsi, in the western desert, all by the time he was twelve. After a couple of years there, staying with family and in boarding, he came back to our village again, and had been there since. When he moved the first time, at perhaps seven years old, so, it seemed, had his mother – not to Kasane with him, but to Francistown, in the far north-eastern corner of the country. By that time, he reflected, she was working and didn't seem to be “into alcohol or any habits unusual...and me also, I saw my photos...it seems like I was well provided [for],” he added, taking a curiously distant, sceptical perspective on himself. The only explanation he could

ascertain was that they had had to separate and move “because of life”. His mother and two of his siblings still lived together in Francistown, and an older sister lived near them with her own children. Another of his sisters “lived outside”, as he described his own circumstances; but he could not say where, or with whom, or why.

He was in Form Four when his relatives began to “abuse” him, as he described it, making him “do too much household chores and shopping”; the rest of the children in the yard had been too small to help with work around the home, and he had been left with all of it. This complaint, a fairly usual one for young people his age, was what he said had finally brought him to our yard. His account made no mention of the witchcraft he had cited on his first appearance. “None of them came to hear why I runned [sic],” he noted of his natal family (though the same was true of us at home). He lavished praise on the Legaes as his host family, noting, “my mother didn’t contribute any cent, and they didn’t demand nothing [sic]”; and added, “I wish the most high to drive me not to forget them...they are my saviours and trusted friends.”

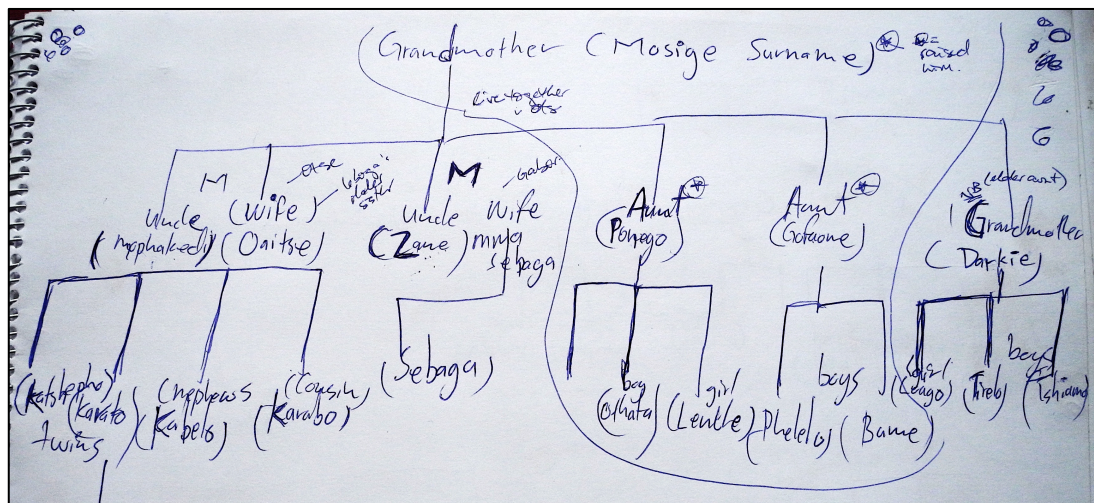
To this narrative, Bonolo had added a family chart. On one page, he drew in his mother’s parents, and all of their descendants down to his nieces and nephews. Down the right hand side of the page, from his grandfather, he drew an additional, long line to a second grandmother, with a generic dichotomous split line below her, and



Bonolo’s first family chart.

nothing else. He focused on his mother's family, telling me about his aunts and uncles and cousins. As we talked, I realised that he had not been staying with any of them in Dithaba – indeed, none of them were in the village at all. I asked him to tell me more about the second grandmother he had sketched at right angles to his grandfather, and her family.

He explained that she and his grandfather had not been married, and so he had not sketched in that side of the family. He began to do so, with some hesitation. Slowly I realised that one of the aunts on this branch of the family tree was the one who had



Bonolo's second family chart.

taken him to school in Gantsi; and that one of the uncles was the one who had followed up Bonolo's 'issue' with us occasionally at home. He then explained that it was this grandmother, two of her daughters and their children with whom he had been living in Dithaba for years – and in reaction against whom he had come to stay with us. He described the grandmother and aunts as people who had raised him, though they were not *batsadi* (parents). He did not even list his mother among his *batsadi*. Only his mother's married parents achieved that status.

Perhaps halfway through the interview, the phone rang, and Bonolo paused to answer it. Uncannily, it was his mother calling from Francistown. I had heard she called from time to time to check in on him, but had not witnessed a call myself. He smiled and sounded excited, like a child suddenly, asking about when he could go to visit. As the conversation progressed he became quieter, mumbling assent. Finally he

dropped the receiver with a sigh. She was promising to come to Dithaba to visit his extended family, and then take him back up to Francistown with her for the school holidays. He was sceptical. “*Nna ke blamea mama*,” he asserted – me, I blame my mom. When he had had his misunderstandings with his family in Dithaba, he explained, she had refused to come. “If she had come, they could have known the problem and resolved it,” he asserted. “But she didn’t come at all. Even now she is not going to come.”

We spoke about the future, his plans to study engineering at the University and perhaps go to work for the army or the mines. “I want to stay far from my mom, both geographically and emotionally,” he said, when I asked where he’d like to settle.

As we wrapped up the interview, I mentioned to Bonolo that the government was thinking about launching a formal foster parenting programme, whereby people would be recruited and trained to look after children who were having serious problems living with their families – much as he had. He was categorical in his response: “I don’t support that.” Surprised, I asked him why not. He shook his head. “It’s not good to take children from their families, they should know they have responsibility for those children no matter what,” he explained. I asked what he would tell children in his situation to do. He smiled. “I guess they could do what I did. But they should try by all means to solve their problems.”

Most of the Batswana friends to whom I mentioned Bonolo’s presence at home found the situation surprising, even dubious. As common as it is to circulate children among kin, for a child to stay with non-kin is somewhat beyond the pale, and many view it with suspicion. One friend, however, who worked at the University, described a very similar situation in his own family. A close friend of his daughter’s had lost her parents in her early teens, and afterwards spent much of her time at their house. When they were making plans to move across the country to the capital a few years later, the girl’s older siblings approached them, and asked whether they would consider taking her with them. They explained that she had come to see them as

parents, and they were concerned she might take their loss doubly hard. And so my friend and his wife agreed. He laughed bitterly as he recalled how difficult it had been to have two teenage girls in the house at once – the more so because while one was his daughter, the other wasn't (he used the English term 'foster daughter' throughout our conversation). He sent her home to her family at holidays, and had recently put her into boarding school nearer to them, retaining responsibility for her fees and upkeep.

There are three telling details in these stories. One is that – contrary to popular assertion – Batswana do indeed take in children from outside of their kin networks. The second is that it is often the children themselves who orchestrate these arrangements (compare Leinaweaver 2007a). And the third is that – although they undertake the responsibilities of a family member, and are treated in many of the same ways – these children neither see themselves nor are seen to be members of their fostering families. They are 'living outside': of their natal families, and of their host families as well. Like child circulation among kin, then, 'living outside' does not extend or replace kinship so much as define and reproduce its limits.

Thus, though Bonolo slept, ate, worked, played, and otherwise stayed with the family in much the same ways as the other boys did, and though he was treated with affection and goodwill, he was not identified – nor did he identify – as family. (Contrast what Klaitz [2010: 8] describes as the adoption of 'spiritual children' by the bishop of the church he profiles.) No specific claims were made upon him: he was not sent on errands, he was not scolded, and neither he nor his mother was expected to provide any specific contributions to his upkeep. Nor did he, in his turn, make any specific requests or claims beyond being allowed to stay. He was not taken along to funerals, weddings, or other large parties, nor was any great noise made of his presence at home. There was little special effort to get to know him, develop intimacy, or otherwise draw him closer into the family. And Bonolo himself seemed satisfied with this arrangement, preferring to think and speak of his host family as 'saviours' and 'trusted friends' than as surrogate kin.

Again, these limitations make sense if we include *dikgang* among the defining characteristics of kinship. Bonolo's experience with his chosen host family was marked by a surprising lack of conflict – considering the frequency of conflict we experienced at home. Mutual claims, obligations, knowledge and intimacy were all avoided, I suspect, precisely in order to ensure there would be few things to fall out about. Moreover, the Legaes did not get involved with the ongoing disputes in Bonolo's natal family whatsoever. Though Kagiso visited Bonolo's family to report his presence with us and hear about the issue at hand (like a mediator might), and though he shared that information with his parents, once it was clear that Bonolo would be staying, Kagiso conscientiously avoided getting involved – or drawing in anyone else. He took the care of Bonolo as a temporary responsibility, but did not take on the resolution of the conflicts that brought him. Nor was Kagiso, nor anyone else at home, asked to help expedite the issue by Bonolo or anyone in Bonolo's family. Only Bonolo's mother was in a position appropriate to resolving *dikgang* with her family; no-one sought to replace her.

While, on a superficial level, Bonolo's experience suggests a kin-making dynamic, closer examination shows that it is anything but – precisely because those situations in which *dikgang* might emerge are explicitly forgone. Bonolo is not called nor sent, nor reprimanded for his movements, and is left to stay as and where he sees fit; neither he nor his family is required to make contributions, nor are their contributions compared with those made by others in his hosting family; and his pre-existing relationships are neither enquired into, nor discussed, nor made unduly visible. Care, in this scenario, is delinked from *dikgang*; and, thus delinked, is insufficient to making kin. As Bonolo himself emphasised in parting, responsibility and problem-solving (or conflict-resolution) are equally critical to kinship. In a context where kinship entails risk, where those who are closest to you are also most dangerous to you, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that a family otherwise willing to provide care would hold the expansion of their kin networks in such careful check.

So far, then, we have seen that child circulation among Batswana has an unexpected effect: to produce and reproduce nearness and distance in relatedness, whether

among kin or between kin and non-kin. Circulation does not extend nor supplement kinship, so much as define its terms and limits. And as a practice, it creates this distinction primarily in terms of differential responses to *dikgang*. How, then, might government-driven initiatives in formal foster care – where children are removed from environments of perceived abuse or danger, and placed with non-kin foster parents trained for the purpose – fare in the Tswana context? I turn to this consideration next.

Children in Need of Care: Formal Foster Parenting

Bana ba tshipa tshwaraganang fa lo kgaogana lo so lwamogotlha.

The wildcat's children cling together; separating them invites disaster.

“They understand informal fostering – that is the practice we are doing. It's foreign when we talk about the legal part. That's what is putting us in trouble. But if they are not relatives, we need law.”

Tumelo and I sat on either side of her wide desk in pools of shadow left by the daylight filtering in through her high, small office windows. It was an unusual moment of quiet. I had visited her previously at the simple concrete block adjoined to Water Affairs and hidden from the highway by a string of bars, which served as the Social and Community Development (S&CD, or social work) office. But on past occasions she was inevitably busy with long lines of stoic caregivers, groups of roving young people, or the spreadsheet report listing her orphaned clients by name, surname, age, and ward, which was due in at Social Services every month. Diminutive and feisty, Tumelo was energetic to the point that it was often difficult to keep up with her; she spoke a mile a minute and changed topics at lightning speed. She was passionate, humble, and quick to laugh, and she had a particularly mischievous, conspiratorial smile.

Tumelo – whom we met in Chapter One – was the social worker who ran the Foster Care Pilot Programme in our village for its duration. When the pilot was launched in 2007, I was responsible for its orchestration at Social Services, in conjunction with a major national NGO. In the programme’s initial phase, we had identified a number of priority districts – including Tumelo’s – and run in-depth training for teams of social workers in each. But to my knowledge only Tumelo’s office had gone as far as recruiting parents and placing children.

The idea of formal foster care was not altogether new to Botswana when the pilot was undertaken: social work degrees at the University involved a core course in it, and detailed procedures had been laid out in common law (the Children in Need of Care Guidelines; RoB 2005a). That said, that law had been ten hesitant years in the making, and by 2007 it had seldom been deployed in the removal and placement of children for which it made provision. In the context of the AIDS epidemic and perceived breakdown among extended families, social workers customarily expressed an urgent need for ‘alternative care’ for children, and many were concerned about the overcrowding and appropriateness of institutions in this role. But they were equally uncomfortable with the notion of formal foster care: fostering the children of non-kin, they argued, was fundamentally un-Setswana. Unsurprisingly, then, while the programme was the first of its kind, it had lapsed since my departure from Social Services – though the NGO concerned was working diligently with a few remaining government supporters to revive it.

“I’m not sure how it came to Dithaba,” Tumelo admitted, as we reflected on the programme’s beginnings. “There were so many problems there at the time. Property grabbing was a serious issue.¹⁰ Family conflicts.” I asked her to expand. “Conflicts can be caused by lots of things, maybe jealousy of relatives, fighting over property, or just lack of understanding among siblings. Anybody can report it, though it might

¹⁰ ‘Property grabbing’ is a hallmark issue of the AIDS era in Botswana. Generally it was cast in terms of unscrupulous relatives taking advantage of uncertainty around the inheritance of a dead person’s property – especially land – to dispossess the spouses and children of the deceased. This dispossession was especially common in cases where the deceased and his or her partner had not been officially married, in which case the partner and children had no clear customary rights to the deceased’s property. (See Chapter One.)

not come out clearly that it is conflict, but reading between the lines then one can see.” I was struck by how mundane the sorts of conflict she was describing were – they were the sorts of everyday *dikgang* I had experienced at home. But Dithaba was often singled out as having been particularly hard-hit by AIDS from its onset (see Introduction); and the subtext of Tumelo’s comment seemed to be that these mundane conflicts were more serious, more numerous, or in any case more frequently referred to social workers, as a result.

Tumelo described how the programme unfolded, from her two-day training workshop in the city to the process of briefing the *kgotla* (customary court), Village Development Committee, and district councillors. “They all knew cases” that they thought appropriate for fostering, she noted. Rather than put out a call for volunteers, Tumelo worked in collaboration with these key village groups to select roughly twenty women who could form a ‘bank’ of potential foster parents. “They were women who knew how to run their families,” she explained of the candidates, “and know how to care. They have a heart for children, and love.” Their families were stable; many were married, though not all; the number of their children was comparatively few, or they were already grown. Income didn’t seem to be a particular factor. When the women were called to a workshop on the new programme – covering parenting skills, children’s rights and relevant laws, to which most of them would not have had formal exposure before – all came.

During the pilot, Tumelo had arranged a single removal and placement in the village, for three boys ranging in age from nine to thirteen. They had been staying with their grandmother, but there had been fights among the family about food and over who would care for the children. Recounting the case, Tumelo didn’t go into detail – partly out of professional discretion, perhaps, but largely because it was a familiar narrative in the orphan care field and scarcely bore repeating. As we have seen previously (Chapter Two), government provision of food baskets to the caregivers of registered orphans is widely understood as a source of significant conflict and competition among extended families – and as symbolic of their fundamental fractiousness, ruthlessness, and untrustworthiness as care-providers for children.

Again, the issue struck me as mundane – particularly as a justification for child removal. Tumelo left me to ‘read between the lines’.

In handling the case, Tumelo went to the *kgotla*, or customary court, first, accompanied by the boys’ grandmother and a letter written and signed by the prospective foster parent, Mma Dineo. “It was an emergency situation,” she explained; she planned to go the official legislative route, through the Children’s Court in the city, later on – though in the end they never did. But, she pointed out, “even if it can go to the courts, it has to go back to the *kgotla*; whatever is happening should be reported there.” She described the *kgotla* as a repository of local knowledge, in which the movements of children, promises and obligations of families should be stored – even (and especially) when the children and families themselves had lost track of them. A woman active and outspoken in local child protection initiatives, Mma Dineo had also been insistent about taking the proceedings through the *kgotla*. “She was very cautious,” Tumelo reflected thoughtfully; “I’m not sure what about. *Hei!* That lady can talk,” she added, noting with some chagrin Mma Dineo’s frequent visits at the social work office with concerns and complaints about her charges.

The boys had wanted to be sent to boarding school, but instead moved in with Mma Dineo. Everything went smoothly at first – until the food basket and other government resources attached to the boys’ care followed them. Officially, the law overseeing formal foster placements explicitly forbade the provision of material support or remuneration to foster parents, in order to ensure people did not take children in for ‘the wrong reasons’: exploitation or personal gain. In practice, however – especially given the connection between care and material support in Tswana understanding (Chapter Two) – social workers and trained foster parents alike expected that some compromise would be necessary. Reassigning government provisions to follow the children was the most obvious compromise to hand. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the boys’ grandmother became furious with the arrangement, and made her disgruntlement clear in rather public scenes at both the social workers’ office and Mma Dineo’s place. “I guess it was just jealousy,” Tumelo explained, downplaying it, though the public exposure to insults of family-wrecking was no

doubt a challenge even to the staunch Mma Dineo. Ultimately, Tumelo stressed, it did not derail the placement.

Shortly thereafter, some unexpected family turned up. An uncle from the father's side came looking for the boys, offering to take them. He said his family was angry, and they wanted the boys back. The boys seemed to want to go back, too. "When we arranged for the boys to be fostered we didn't know about those relatives," Tumelo explained, matter-of-factly. "We only found out about them after they came to find the children." Knowing that social workers were generally quite thorough in tracing extended families, I asked how they had been overlooked. "We didn't really expect help from them," Tumelo explained, "and they were difficult to find." To reduce confusion, the uncle was initially turned away. After the boys were settled, he was called back, had the situation explained to him, and signed off on the placement as well.

A little over two years later, the boys' uncle returned, and offered to transfer them to the junior school in his village. "The family felt they had completed their punishment," Tumelo explained, paraphrasing his rationale. "So the boys went. But I just heard on Saturday that the boys want to come back to Dithaba again, to be with their grandmother," she added. "They are spoiled. I told Mma Dineo and the family, just accept them, they are children, don't fight with them." Her complaisance seemed strange given the active role she had taken in their removal, placement, and later movements as well.

"The placement was a success," Tumelo decided, after some reflection. "Maybe people feel deeply bothered by children being taken out." She shrugged. "To have the option of fostering is good." She noted that several of her current clients had had to be placed in a local institutional place of safety, which she felt was overwhelmed and often ended up 'chasing' children back out to the social workers. "I'm not sure what institutions add," she mused; "fostering is a way of teaching them it's very important to have a family."

Tumelo's account makes plain the ways in which formal foster care differs sharply from its antecedents, the informal circulation of children among kin and between non-kin; and again, these differences revolve primarily around approaches to *dikgang*. Circulating children among extended kin might be seen in terms of delegating responsibilities of care outwith usual contribution-oriented economies and their conflict-management strategies (Chapter Two), creating perpetually irresolvable *dikgang*; taking in non-kin, as a suspension of *dikgang*, which neither exacerbates nor addresses it; and formal fostering as a deliberate attempt to permanently resolve *dikgang*. Where the first two reproduce appropriate distances of relatedness, the last seems to conflate and collapse them, and attempts to offer not simply an alternative family but an alternative model of kinship in their place.

Tumelo's description of the *dikgang* arising among her client families is familiar from the sorts of conflicts we have explored elsewhere in this thesis. While she did not explain how such issues were initially brought to her attention, it is most likely that she would have first come into contact with the families when they registered for the government orphan care programme; and that she would have been called upon to settle intransigent disputes thereafter by the family itself, whether by an adult or one of the children (compare her handling of Mpho's family, as described in Chapters 1 and Two). Especially intractable problems at home may be handed to government institutions like the police, clinics, and social workers – generally in the hope that the handing-on itself (rather than any solutions that might be engineered) will help preserve the delicate balance of obligations and responsibilities, power and care, within the family. In this sense, families might envision the social worker's intervention – including the placement of their children in formal fostering situations – as simply a first step in the process of rectifying an ongoing family issue.

However, in cases like those described by Tumelo, removing a child into formal foster care presents a problematic set of knock-on effects. The child herself, for example, is seldom the singular focus of *dikgang*, which as we have seen reflect wider kin dynamics and relationships. Battles over property or responsibilities of care, misunderstandings between parents or among their (often co-resident) siblings,

may all affect a child, but seldom take her as their object. A mismatch emerges between the family's positioning of the social worker as an extra-familial actor whose involvement might usefully suspend *dikgang* until the *status quo* can be re-established; and the social worker's dual mandate of protecting children, and achieving more or less permanent fixes to family crises (whether in specific cases or by promoting alternative models of being kin). And this mismatch is exacerbated by a certain myopia on the part of the state; in spite of social workers' best efforts in tracing families, their positioning in the office and the burden of their caseloads (see Chapter Six) makes it virtually impossible for them to recognise the kin affected, the ways they are affected, and the ways they intend the social worker to be involved. No wonder, then, that the boys' family described above saw a long-term removal as a punitive gesture, rather than a means of resolving the *dikgang* with which the social worker was presented in the first place. Critical capacities and responsibilities to contribute care for the boys (and for them to make their contributions in turn) were not only drawn into question, but foreclosed; the ability to resolve *dikgang* appropriately in ways that involve them was removed, and the repercussions for reciprocal obligations between adults and children rendered deeply uncertain. The processes critical to forming kinship with, through and around the boys have, in other words, been suspended.

Worse than this, the family to which the child is removed is drawn into potential *dikgang* with the child's natal family. The loss of the child, their work in the home, and any contributions of care they can mobilise is a source of serious bitterness and ill-will towards the fostering family, as the grandmother's fury and public insults demonstrate. In this situation, the social worker is the primary arbiter of conflict, rather than the child's natal family. As Tumelo's chagrin with Mma Dineo above suggests, the position of arbiter is hardly a welcome one for social workers: they are not only overwhelmed with their caseloads, but of necessity entirely disengaged from the day-to-day life of their client families, especially their conflicts – which require a great deal of unavailable time and effort to address. Most social workers will therefore hear out an issue, and perhaps offer advice, but will not re-enter the fray. Natal and foster families are thus drawn into kin-like (and kin-affecting) *dikgang*,

without means of resolution that might actually build connections between them and contain the risks that conflicts pose.

Beyond these new dimensions of *dikgang*, the formal foster parenting programme seems to presuppose and decree a certain ideal of closeness or intimacy between the foster family and fostered child which – as we have seen – is somewhat at odds with the more fraught affect that characterises usual practices of child circulation. The recruitment drive’s emphasis on able parents, who ‘know how to care’, ‘have a heart for children’, and ‘have love’, and the social worker’s willingness to ensure that additional material support is available to women who meet those criteria, is an initial sign of this tendency. Of course, Bonolo’s example above showed us that these characteristics on their own are not necessarily kin-making; indeed, the absence of similar discourse in describing parenting ideals (focused more on ‘raising properly’ or ‘help’) suggests they are backgrounded, or at least left implicit. But to the extent that fostering families are also drawn into *dikgang* with their foster-child’s family by the placement process, and unable to refer conflicts with the child back to his family or the social worker, they are placed in an increasingly stand-alone, replacement kin position.

In this sense, Batswana may read formal fostering less as a matter of taking children out of dangerous families to safety, than of bringing an entire network of non-kin into a level of partial intimacy and irreconcilable conflict that may make those non-kin themselves especially dangerous. In contradistinction to informal child circulation, formal fostering seeks to extend, supplement, and replace family; and in the attempt – which can only be partially successful – it spreads out the risk and danger associated with kinship, instead of containing it. It presents, in other words, a worst-of-both-worlds scenario. To return to Wagner’s (1977) framing, formal fostering interferes with the processes of differentiating kin that child circulation usually enables, thereby producing “a kind of contagion, a moral degeneracy” (1977: 624) that people register when they describe the practice as ‘un-Setswana’.

In formal fostering, ‘the law’ – as Tumelo glosses it, and by which she means the colonially-imported Roman-Dutch common law, rather than the customary law of the *kgotla* – takes responsibility for articulating the distinction between kin and non-kin; for identifying and resolving *dikgang* among kin; and beyond this, for articulating an ideal form of kinship. In doing so, it deploys language and principles quite distinct from those to which Batswana are accustomed. And paradoxically, in practice, it requires and produces a muddling of intra- and inter-familial kin distinctions, of processes by which families manage *dikgang*, and of Setswana kin ideals. I suggest it is the power that formal fostering gives ‘the law’ in deciding how families should work that makes many fundamentally uncomfortable with it – not least because it marks a fundamental inversion of what the relationship between kinship practice and law (like politics) *should* be. In other words, the ‘un-Setswana’ character of formal fostering also lies in its attempt to redefine kinship practice, instead of being modelled thereon and directed thereby.

Conclusion

Much of the literature on fosterage and child circulation understands it primarily in terms of prevailing political and economic conditions (Alber 2004; Goody 1982: 3) often of crisis (Ingstad 2004) and specifically as a response to poverty (Leinaweaver 2007a, 2007b; Stack 1974). It is less frequently cast as an ordinary kin practice (see Alber 2004 and Carsten 1991 for notable exceptions). Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners alike work on the assumption that child circulation in the context of AIDS fits the former bracket (for example, Ingstad 2004) and can best be understood (and formally deployed) as a response to mass orphanhood and a crisis of care. However, taking cues from Schapera’s (1940: 246-7) descriptions of practices that are familiar from my own fieldwork over seventy years later, in this chapter I have argued that child circulation forms an integral dimension of the ideals, structures, and practice of Tswana kinship. Further, I have sought to demonstrate that it serves not simply to extend kin networks or bind them more closely together, but to differentiate and distance them; that *dikgang* are critical means and indicators of this

differentiation; and, counterintuitively, that such differentiation is critical to the resilience of those networks.

In Chapter Two, I examined ways in which relationships among siblings, between them and their nieces and nephews, and between grandparents and grandchildren are all frequently refigured as parent-child relationships – thereby generating a shifting field of generations and intergenerational relatedness. In child circulation, we find processes which work continuously to differentiate these relationships from one another, and to prioritise certain parent-child (or generational) configurations over others. Thus, a girl like Lesedi might conceivably have an older sister, an aunt, a biological mother and a grandmother, all of whom are potentially and actually considered mothers to her. But if her biological mother were largely absent, such that she was raised primarily by her grandmother, her grandmother would take precedence as mother; and Lesedi's relationships with other members and generations of her family would shift to accommodate this precedence. If her older sister lived elsewhere and they seldom saw each other, the sister's parent-role would be diminished in comparison; though by the same token, if Lesedi went to live with that sister, the latter's parent-role would be gradually prioritised. And these configurations often change over time, depending on the circumstances of the people involved and their enactment of the key processes of kin-making we have explored thus far. While an “essential similarity *flows* between and among” (Wagner 1977: 623, *italics in original*) these relationships, making them each a sort of parenthood, the circulation of children – counterintuitively – works to disrupt that flow.

This differentiation, in turn, enables the multiplicity that is so characteristic of Tswana kin roles and relationships. One can have multiple mothers, be mother to multiple people (siblings, offspring, grandchildren), and be multiple figures (sister, mother) to a single person, not because these relationships are conflated and interchangeable, but to the extent they are differentiated and particularised. Multiplicity suggests not simply that anyone or everyone *can be* someone's parent; but that several specific people, by dint of their positions in a network of relationships, the responsibilities they undertake (of managing movement,

contributing care, and negotiating *dikgang*), and their explicit differentiation from one another, *are* one's parents. Similarly, one can only be sister *and* mother to someone (potentially or actually) if these are differentiated roles. And it is perhaps this multiplicity above all – and by extension, the means of differentiation that produce it – that has made families and kin practice so fraught and yet so resilient in the context of the AIDS crisis, and many other crises besides. While there is no question that socio-politico-economic contexts affect kin practice, then, it is not simply the stimulus-response effect that is often presupposed; one produces, is implicated in and adapted to the other. In this sense, I suggest that it may not be so much the epidemic itself but assumptions about the child-care crisis it has created and policy responses thereto that have begun to introduce new variables into Tswana understandings of child circulation.

In the next chapter, I move from the creation of appropriate distinctions within and between families, to the creation of appropriate distinctions between the family and the village. Taking my cue from concerns about the appropriate relationship between law and kinship noted in the context of formal fostering above, I explore the work that goes into ordering interactions between the *lelwapa* (courtyard/house/family) and the *motse* (village/community). As in previous chapters, self-making is implicated in, and in turn enables, these processes of ordering and distinguishing. And as in all the scenarios I have explored thus far, the management of *dikgang* plays a critical role as well – this time, especially in terms of its exposure and concealment. These dynamics were thrown into sharpest relief in the frequent public events that characterised village life during my fieldwork – most notably, in a major celebration of Mmapula and Dipuo that we organised at home; and in the homecoming celebration for the first men's initiation group in over a generation. I turn first to the family feast.

Chapter Five

“We Show People We Are Together”: Producing Persons, Families, Villages, and the *Morafe*

Motse o lwapeng.

The village is in the home.

“There are other things I could say here; but I am told I shouldn’t.” Dipuo paused for effect, casting a dour, subtly challenging look over the dozens of people seated at long tables before him, and the dozens of people standing behind them, jostling for shade under the lip of the tent.

Behind his immediate audience, in the far corner of the yard and out of earshot, still more people were busy tending the stews and beef *seswaa*, the chicken, rice and samp that had been cooking all morning in massive three-legged cast-iron pots. I had popped into my commandeered room to check on the ginger beer, which we’d been fermenting in a fifty-gallon vat for two days, and to which I’d added apples and oranges and pineapple early that morning. In the room with the ginger beer women were filling enormous enamel dishes with squash and beetroot and chakalaka. Stacks of plates stood in the corners. The women moved with alacrity. When the speeches were over, the meal had to be ready.

The party – a celebration to appreciate Dipuo and Mmapula for having raised their children so well – had been in the works for several months, and had been anticipated with excitement, anxiety, and endless meetings, errands and preparations at home. Two cows had been slaughtered, a vast amount of food procured, pots and chairs and dishes borrowed, a tent and tables and sound-system hired. Themed T-shirts emblazoned with a slightly misprinted quote from Proverbs 23: 25, ‘Let’s our parents be glad’, had been ordered and sold. His sons had bought Dipuo a new suit and shoes; Mmapula had had two new dresses tailored. We’d repainted the inside of the house in a bright peach, and re-stuccoed its outer walls with a rough coat of deep burgundy. That morning, guests had begun trickling in early to help with the cooking and preparations; as we neared mealtime, their numbers had swollen to perhaps two

hundred. It was the first time I had seen almost the entire extended family – from near and far – together in one place. Neighbours, friends, co-workers, churchmates, some local politicians and even a well-known singer from the village had all come. The brothers and sisters of the yard scurried hither and thither sorting out last-minute problems, shepherding people, worrying whether there would be enough food and whether it would be cooked on time; but they were in decidedly high spirits, broadly teasing one another (and me), working efficiently and happily together. “Tomorrow we show people we are together,” Moagi had said to us late the night before; and so we seemed to be.

As one of the guests of honour, Dipuo’s was the last official speech to be made. The assembled crowd had already heard a cousin give the genealogy of the family stretching back three generations, to the grandparents of the elderly couple; formal introductions of its key living members; and short speeches of appreciation from the Mmapula’s *malome* (the son of her mother’s brother, who had inherited the role), one of the couple’s children, and one of their grandchildren. Mmapula had just given an impassioned oration about parenthood and family. When it was his turn to speak, Dipuo began by noting, “*Ke bediwa Dipuo mme ga ke rate dipuo*” – I am called Dipuo but I dislike disagreements (dipuo means ‘talks’, literally) – to general laughter. But it was also a sort of ironic warning, a phrase he had been uttering ominously in family meetings leading up to the event itself. As his speech wore on, his meaning became clearer.

“I can’t refuse, I’m happy about what they did for us today,” he allowed, picking up from his deliberate pause. “Even though they are saying I should not tell you that I’m not happy with the fact that they are not helping me at the lands, and not looking after me – yes, I won’t say it.”

Over the few days previous to the party, the old man had been sounding out people in various quarters about voicing complaint over his children’s supposed filial failures in his speech. Provocatively, he had suggested the possibility first to his eldest daughter Boikanyo, and then to his son Moagi – both of whom had been

marginally involved in the party planning, but were nonetheless contributing and implicated in the accusation. Both told him abruptly it would be inappropriate. Worse, he then suggested to one of their cousins that he would shame his children in front of the crowd for being busy making parties and pretending to care about him in public when in fact they don't help him at the lands or look after him properly. Reputedly the cousin had become very angry with him and insisted he should say no such thing. But now it had been said.

As he finished, some of the women began gathering in the outdoor kitchen – converted now to a serving station – and started filling plates for the older children to ferry around the yard to guests. To the siblings' great relief, there was ample food, and still more left over for guests who might arrive later. But most of them had been busy in the yard during Dipuo's speech, and would only come to hear of his imputations later that evening when we sat down to debrief. "*Re na le mathata*," Modiri concluded then – we have problems. "*A mantsi*," added Moagi. Many.

At any given time there were countless celebrations in the offing in Dithaba. During my fieldwork, we organised three notable parties at home: one for Lady's first birthday; one for Lesego's 13th birthday; and the enormous feast described above to celebrate Mmapula and Dipuo's success as parents. Scattered in between were celebrations hosted by neighbours, friends, and relatives: for Christmas or New Year's, *motshelo* (savings group) meetings, graduations or birthdays – including the 83rd birthday of Mmapula's aunt, a party that drew well over a hundred people. And this is to say nothing of frequent village-wide events held at the *kgotla* (customary court), parties thrown by local NGOs, baby showers, weddings, funerals – nor the send-off and homecoming celebrations for the first men's initiation in over thirty years. Some were customary, with long-standing precedent – like Lady's first birthday; but most were *ad hoc*, like those attached to the otherwise randomly-chosen birthdays of Lesego or Mmapula's aunt. Either way, the sheer variety and frequency of events in which we were involved suggests something more than just a penchant for parties. This chapter undertakes a close reading of two quite different

events – the party at home described above, and a celebration of new initiates at the *kgotla*. I consider such events as key sites where families invite and contain conflict (or *dikgang*) in ways that establish the limits of kinship; as alternative, experimental means of producing personhood when pregnancy, marriage, and other routes can be so fraught; and as moments in which specific distinctions and relationships between the home and the village, the family and the *morafe* (tribe) are generated, sustained and negotiated.

A marked prevalence of celebratory events is nothing new among the Tswana, though the variety of their motivation may have changed. Schapera (1940) notes the frequency of parties and get-togethers in the colonial era, for everything from ‘doctoring’ new huts to births, confirmations, initiations, betrothals, weddings and funerals (though he notes some causes for celebration had already been abandoned; 1940: 174-75). He touches on them only in passing, however, as “[e]vents... [that] help to relieve the monotony of what at best is hardly a colourful existence, even to the people themselves” (Schapera 1940: 172) – though he concedes that they might “counteract in some degree the disintegrating tendencies of frequent separation” (1940: 178) that characterises household routines and residential patterns (1940: Chapter Six). In this latter capacity, he connects them with family meetings called to deal with marriage negotiations, court cases, and internal conflict of the sort I have explored across this thesis.

I have already questioned whether the spatialities of Tswana kinship are significant of ‘disintegrating tendencies’, in Chapter One. Here, I focus on these two sorts of ‘family gatherings’, as Schapera calls them – for celebration on one hand, and for negotiating issues on the other – and suggest that while both are important in making kin, they are of rather different orders. The former gatherings explicitly involve everyone from neighbours to friends to political figures, and focus on performing the family’s success in achieving certain kin ideals; whereas the latter are exclusive to key members of the family, are carefully restricted and hidden, and grapple continuously with the threats and failures that families face (and, I have suggested, through which families are sustained). While both bring family together, they do so

in quite different ways, to quite different ends. They are, of course, related in that the former often produces the latter: like other kin-making processes, hosting (or, in the case of initiation, participation in) events creates discord and risks of its own, which must be managed and contained in certain ways, and which are critical processes in sustaining and delimiting family. But in their differentiation, part of the relevance of celebrations to this thesis emerges: more than simply relieving monotony or encouraging togetherness, celebrations demonstrate the negotiation of tensions between the familial and political dimensions of Tswana kinship, between publically performing kin ideals and managing its fraught realities.

Celebrations provide insight into the production and management of other tensions as well. As McKinnon and Cannell (2013) point out, any distinction between the family and the community is ideological, not given, and therefore requires significant boundary-making work – in spite of which, a mutual reliance and interaction remains (2013: 11). I suggest that events like those described below mark critical sites for this work, and useful lenses on the interdependencies that emerge. They require participants to “negotiate issues of inclusion and exclusion, of cooperation and rejection, of civility and incivility” (Durham and Klaits 2002: 778); and these negotiations work primarily to differentiate and connect certain groups from or with others in certain ways – especially, I argue, kin from and with non-kin. Moreover, they are negotiations condensed around *dikgang*, or conflict and crisis. Glossing the proverb with which I have opened this chapter, Schapera suggests that “a man’s social standing and influence are often determined by his reputation as a host” (Schapera 1940: 170). His analysis hints at but understates the relevance of the conduct and management of the home – and of kin and non-kin *in* the home – to the political dynamics of the village. I suggest that the hosting of parties – establishing a family’s relative success, its collective ability to mobilise people and resources, to cooperate, to provide amply for itself and others, and to contain such risks and conflicts as arise effectively – establishes specific boundaries and relationships between the home and the village, the family realm and the public realm. To say *motse o lwapeng* – the village is in the *lelwapa* (lit. courtyard; also family) – is to suggest that the village begins in, is sustained by, and even contained by the home;

and that, in many ways, the shape and meaning of the public sphere, and the power in its politics, emanates from this specific relationship with the home. Larger events – like the initiation homecoming, which is organised by the *kgotla* (customary court) and draws in the whole *morafe* (tribe) – suggest means of exploring the extent of the *lelwapa*'s encompassing priority, and ways in which the boundaries and relationships between kin and *morafe* are negotiated from beyond the family. In both cases, as Schapera's gloss implies in its emphasis on hosting, these relationships become most apparent through the lens of events and celebrations.

Of the list of celebrations presented above, weddings and funerals have enjoyed the most anthropological attention in the context of AIDS – especially the latter (Dahl 2009a: Introduction; Dilger 2008; Durham 2002a; Geissler and Prince 2013: Chapters Six, Nine; Klaitz 2005, 2010: Chapter Six). While we have touched on weddings and will return to funerals towards the end of the thesis, in this chapter I have chosen to focus on comparatively exceptional, *ad hoc* events. Attention to such festivities helps to sidestep deep-seated and problematic assumptions that AIDS affects only family reproduction and survival – as the focus on weddings and funerals suggests – and to take a wider perspective on the potential legacies of the epidemic. Parties like the one described above often share many features with weddings: the range of invitees, large white tent, changes of clothing, choreographed dancing, programme of speeches, and not least the feast itself; and this resonance has important implications, as we will see below. However, opportunities for these more common parties are more easily and spontaneously created – often at more or less random junctures, in response to a felt need as much as a specific event, time, or more predictable rationale – and their frequency suggests something ongoing and continuous in the dynamics they generate. In this sense, parties bridge the ritual and everyday dynamics of kinship – and become especially relevant when certain key rituals, like marriage, are so difficult to orchestrate.

Of course, an initiation has little of the same potential spontaneity; but the fact that it had been foregone for so long, was adapted somewhat arbitrarily, and was reintroduced as much in response to a felt need as a tradition of practice, certainly

gave it more of an exceptional, *ad hoc* feel than what one might ordinarily expect from a rite of passage. Both parties and initiations also proved surprisingly open to experimentation, such that small organisations or government agencies could (and did) organise and adapt them to their own ends – adaptations we will explore further in Chapter Six. I suggest this adaptability makes the two otherwise distinct sorts of events uniquely demonstrative of ongoing negotiations around the limits of family, the differentiation of loosely public from family spheres, and the management of appropriate relationships between the two.

The Village in the Home: A Party

Dijo ga di ratanelwe.

Some do not like the food of others.

Lorato had struck upon the idea for a family party quite spontaneously, not long into the new year. “Isn’t the old woman turning sixty-five this year?” she had remarked with nonchalance as several of us sat in the *lelwapa* one morning. Nobody was quite sure; Mmapula herself was fuzzy on what year she’d been born. “Anyway, we should have a party for her,” Lorato continued, adding, “We’ve never had a *big* party at home.” Smaller parties at home had been frequent enough, but Mmapula and her children alike often voiced a disappointment that nothing larger – specifically, no weddings – had yet been held in the yard.

Modiri, Kelebogile and Oratile were all sitting nearby. Almost immediately, they began thinking up what they could provide and whom they could invite, assessing potential problems and solutions. They were pragmatic and muted, but undoubtedly keen. Modiri noted that having a party for Mmapula without involving Dipuo would create serious misunderstandings, and worsen existing tensions between them; and so the siblings agreed to have an event that would celebrate both of their parents together, as a way of thanking them for having raised their children so well. Modiri

was deputed to speak to Dipuo, and Kelebogile was asked to sound out Mmapula, to ensure both were on board, and to seek their advice.

Once the proper motivation and genre of the party had been established, and the elderly couple had given their approval, a date in December was set and preparations began. They were extensive and drawn-out, moving slowly and stalling frequently at first, picking up urgency as time progressed and the scale of the event grew. What started as a simple idea quickly became ambitious – and costly. We met monthly, and at every meeting it seemed a new expense had been identified: didn't we need a tent? A sound system? What about drinks? More food? Printed invitations? And the house had to be fixed up... Each time the new cost was voiced, everyone would shift uncomfortably and look at their shoes. Kelebogile was often quick to say she had no money; none of us had much to spare, and the everyday costs of running the household already weighed heavily. And yet there was no question that the expense – whatever it was, whether hiring a tent or printing T-shirts – was necessary; it was simply accepted as such. And so the issue would be left hanging, an oppressive weight of expectation over everyone's heads that was resisted and resented.

Addressing these emergent costs was the more difficult because not all of the siblings attended the meetings regularly, or at all. Moagi was out of town; Kagiso was seldom home, regardless of how often we changed our meeting times to anticipate his schedule. Boikanyo came once or twice, nearer the end, but everyone was well aware of her financial circumstances and expected her to help mostly on the day itself. A flat contribution rate per adult family member was decided among the lead organisers who were present – usually Lorato, Kelebogile, Oratile, and Modiri – but it was virtually impossible to enforce a contribution rate on others who had not been there to agree to it. Hoping to draw in help from the extended family, a larger meeting was called perhaps two months before the main event, involving representatives around the siblings' ages, identified with Mmapula's help. But on the day only two people came, and certain key figures – the niece Mmapula had raised as her own child, and Mmapula's maternal uncle (a cousin who had inherited the

position from his father) – were absent and sent no word. Such a taciturn response puzzled and dismayed the siblings, and Mmapula as well.

In the context of this uncertainty, Mmapula indicated we should go to make personal invitations. It was a much more formal process than I had anticipated, and involved us going as a small contingent – Mmapula, Oratile and Lorato, and myself as driver – from yard to yard among the relatives, most of whom lived some distance away, in the next village. We moved in a specific order: first to Dipuo's relatives (from his father's brother's son, to his sister's daughter, to his brother's children); then to Mmapula's brother's house. Each time we were offered chairs in the *lelwapa* of our hosts, and sat shoulder-to-shoulder, facing outwards; and each time, after exchanging greetings and ensuring that our hosts knew who each of us were and how we were related, Mmapula conveyed the formal invitation. Oratile and Lorato were occasionally as clueless as I was about the relationships, even where we all knew the house and people of the yard from weddings and funerals we had attended. "I'll never remember all of these relationships!" sighed Lorato as we drove home. "At least if one of my sons was married I would have a daughter-in-law to send," rejoined Mmapula with a note of melancholy, gazing out the window.

Already in these preparations, we begin to see the extent to which a party relies on the successful undertaking of the full range of kin practices we have examined thus far. Our invitations relied on careful movement across the geography of the grandparents' kin, for example, and involved a dimension of calling and sending. They also worked to articulate kin relationships and making them visible. Our planning meetings revolved entirely around mobilising and contributing resources. And, as we have seen elsewhere, each of these practices is fraught with refusals, absences, regrets, and the risk of failure – *dikgang*, now extended across a much wider field of relations. In this context, too, the family's images of itself are challenged, and its relative success in achieving kin ideals – of marrying sons to acquire daughters-in-law, for example, or of retaining the support of children raised on behalf of others – thrown into question.

The party itself demonstrated still other ways in which celebrations might be considered microcosms of kin practice – with limits. As it approached, we met more frequently, the question of contributions became more urgent, and there were more favours to be asked and things to be bought or collected and choices to be agreed upon. Money began to materialise from somewhere – *motshelo* contributions, debts recalled or incurred, partners, savings, it was never quite clear where – and would sometimes be noted in meetings, sometimes not. No-one wanted to advertise their



Preparing the meal. (Photo: author)

wherewithal too liberally. Indeed, I didn't even know the old man was getting a new suit courtesy of his sons until I saw him wearing it. We met for the last time late into the night before the event – it was the first time all of the siblings met together, and in Mmapula and Dipuo's presence – and ironed out the last costs, contributions, programme details, and errands to be run. Moagi, running the meeting, thanked everyone for their hard work, and invited his parents to offer words of encouragement or advice. "Some people are jealous, and they will try to make problems with what you have done," noted Dipuo. "Work together, show them you are together," he added, echoing Moagi's prior sentiments without irony.

From the moment guests began trickling into the yard, they were carefully managed. The women – mostly friends and neighbours, and a few younger relatives – began arriving first, and were directed to long tables set up in the fenced-in space under the trees to help cleaning and preparing mounds of potatoes, carrots, squash, and

cabbage that had been bought (contributions of food from guests were neither expected nor offered, though a few brought other gifts, as we will see below). Enormous logs, gathered by the young men for days previously, were set in radiating circles to create several low fires not far from the tables, where still other women cooked bread for the helpers' breakfasts. The large pots waited in the wings, deployed later for the cooking of stews and vegetables, samp and sorghum, with a few left to the young men for cooking the beef *seswaa*. Older men and women arrived in the early afternoon, the men sitting with Dipuo in an impromptu circle next to the tent, the women helping with the work that remained to be done as everyone waited for the official programme to begin.

Everyone stayed outside. We had spent hours painting and spackling the houses, but the main house in particular was, in many ways, simply a backdrop for the event: virtually no-one went in it. I chopped fruit in the indoor kitchen in the morning, as it was the only counter space I could find; but even the children from the yard were reluctant to join me there to help. After we left, it remained empty. Mmapula's adjoining room out front was used to dress Dipuo, and later the children. In the secondary house, Kelebogile's room was the changing-room for Mmapula and the women – we all went from cooking clothes, to fancy clothes, to T-shirts as the day proceeded – and as a storeroom for drinks and plates, and anything of value. My room had been cleared out, and housed everything from meat to cooking dishes, ginger beer to salads. Family, close neighbours, and friends or relatives who were helping with the cooking – generally only the women – came and went freely from my room, but efficiently, and did not linger; access to Kelebogile's was regulated by her key, and restricted mostly to family. But perhaps most strikingly, the *lelwapa* was left clear the entire day. The large tent, where the tables were set out for guests and the speeches given, sat at its front edge; at mealtime, older women sat in chairs on the stoop around its edge to eat, children perched below them. And while it became a thoroughfare for those of us cooking and serving, no-one dallied or sat *in* the *lelwapa*, which – as we have seen – was where most of the family's meals were taken, and where guests were always welcomed. (Indeed, this *lelwapa*-avoidance characterised most of the parties held at home, with the notable exception of

children's birthday parties – which were confined to the *lelwapa*.) While anyone and everyone had been invited into the yard, then, they were not only differentially restricted from the intimate spaces of the house (the bedrooms), but uniformly excluded from the shared living spaces (kitchen, sitting room) and even the distinctly public-private heart of the home – the *lelwapa* – itself. While people were drawn into the yard, in other words, they were kept at a distance befitting the boundaries of the family and their existing relationships to it, which the party thereby served to rearticulate.

Establishing boundaries of this sort was in many ways the business of the day. They were established in space and in movement, in terms of who could contribute what and how, and in terms of which relationships were on display and which were not. When Lorato's boyfriend turned up unexpectedly on the perimeters of the yard after dark, she served him outside with some annoyance: "Two of my uncles saw him," she explained later, adding, "I don't need him to be seen by my uncles at a party like this." Visible as Lorato's failed pregnancy had made her relationship (Chapter Three), the rockiness of negotiations thereafter made her boyfriend a figure better hidden from both the family and their guests. And so boundaries were set through every kin practice we have identified in the thesis thus far, carefully including some people and excluding others.

But the boundaries were not always clear. After most of the guests had gone home in the evening, a few close friends and neighbours remaining behind to barbecue the leftover meat, the siblings gathered together in Kelebogile's room to debrief. They invited their parents to join them to begin. The gifts Dipuo and Mmapula had received were all laid out neatly on the floor: large cooking pots, oversize enamel serving dishes, tea sets, other household goods and money. Most had come from friends, neighbours, and more distant family that took the old couple as elders or *malome* (mother's brother) and *mma malome* (lit. female uncle/mother's brother). Dipuo made a special example of the beautiful new cooking pots his nieces and nephews had provided. "You see what beautiful things my relatives have given us," he said. "I have been an uncle to them," he added, before exhaustively listing each

marriage negotiation with which he had assisted, weddings and funerals attended, help given for children and houses. His children listened, nonplussed with the implicit, critical comparison: none of them were married, and none of them had completed a house of his or her own. "I'm going to take these presents that were given by my family, because they were given to appreciate me and my help," he concluded.

Everyone kept their faces studiously blank. After asking Mmapula whether she had any words for them – she had none, except to appreciate them for the day – they let their parents go so that they could evaluate the party in more depth among themselves. It was only at this point that they voiced their shock and hurt. "Did you hear what that old man was saying?" asked Kelebogile incredulously. "Always his nephews, his nephews. Why should he take those things? They're also for his wife!"

The debrief meeting – held among the wreckage of the day's event, changes of clothes and half-finished bottles of soft drink, as well as the collected presents and a couple of sleeping children – was in many ways a tallying of the day's ignominies, many of them generated by Dipuo. "*Hei*," began Moagi, "this old man was refusing even to get dressed this morning." He recounted Dipuo's complaints about his new trousers being ill-fitting, disliking his tie, and completely refusing to wear his shoes as one might recount the misbehaviour of a stubborn child. Dipuo had a serviceable pair of shoes Kagiso had bought him, but a couple of days previously had refused to wear them to the party. Kagiso had dashed to town the day before the party to buy a new pair; and these, too, the old man had rejected, just that morning, complaining that he didn't like their style. Instead he had chosen a battered pair provided some time back by his nephews. "He takes his nephews as if they are his children – as if he doesn't have children," reflected Kelebogile. Modiri and Moagi echoed her last statement word for word, and the others hummed in dismayed agreement. Given everything the siblings had spent on and put into the party, and combined with reports that had filtered back to them from the old man's earlier speech, it was a particularly bitter pill to swallow.

Someone knocked at the door as these tales and grievances were being recounted. “We’re talking!” answered Modiri, ensuring the door was shut tight. In spite of frequent such knocks, no-one was let in for the duration of the meeting – with the exception of a neighbour’s child sent to ask for a drink. Everyone fell carefully silent while she was given some and sent out.

The siblings reassured one another on having provided more than enough food, noting that they had overheard people commenting with satisfaction on how well they had eaten and how amply even latecomers were served. Grumbling about the lack of food after a party was a common means of signifying the event’s failure and casting doubt on the hosts (as a family, as parents, or as a newly-married couple, depending on the event). “Nobody can say they went home not eating,” noted Modiri with a combination of approbation, relief, and latent concern. They were equally pleased with having kept the programme to time, and with the number and variety of guests who had come (aside from one or two notable absences). “I heard some people saying it’s like we were marrying our parents!” noted Lorato with a laugh and visible satisfaction. But it was small consolation. “We need to call this old man and talk to him,” asserted Moagi finally, to general agreement. “We have to tell him it’s not okay for him to treat us like nothing in front of everyone,” agreed Kelebogile.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Dipuo was never called. The next day everyone was busy cleaning the yard and house after the party, returning things rented and borrowed. The day after, children were being prepared to visit their other parents’ families before Christmas, or to go to help at the lands; and Moagi was readying for the long drive back to his base. I asked quietly once or twice whether they were still planning to call their father, and was met with shrugs, sighs, and indications that Moagi would be leaving and it wouldn’t be right to have the meeting without everyone concerned present. And so – like so many others – the issue was left to lie, if not forgotten.

As we saw in the previous chapter, making intimate relationships recognisable is a key means of making them *kin* relations. The same might be said of large-scale

family celebrations: parties involve a public performance of kinship, an explicit display and narration of who is related to whom and how, and of the historical trajectories and qualities of those relationships. Thus, a cousin recounted the family genealogy, identifying which villages (and tribes) the grandparents had come from; and within that context, Moagi introduced each member of the family by order of age, describing who was whose child and their importance to the family. Similar genealogical accounts characterise Tswana wedding feasts. Just as a pregnancy makes a previously-hidden intimate relationship visible and knowable, a party throws the entire network of kin relations into public relief; and, as the frequency of parties suggests, this performance is a key means of expressing and sustaining kinship.

Parties, however, are carefully organised to make certain dimensions of the family publicly recognisable, and to obscure or downplay others. Specifically, celebratory events are meant to demonstrate the achievement of family ideals: especially harmonious co-operation, self-sufficiency and the ability to provide for others. A beautifully built house, the ability to mobilise contributions of things and labour, comfortable surroundings, ample food, music and entertainment, and the seamless coordination of everything from invitations to yard preparations, cooking to the official programme, are all key indicators of the achievement of these ideals. In this sense, parties draw together and provide an opportunity to publicly perform all the ideals of Tswana kinship we have explored so far.

Of course, taking on such a task runs a significant risk of failing to live up to those ideals. And inviting so many people to participate invites heightened scrutiny, and substantial potential for disappointment, criticism, and bad feeling as well. Celebrations put a kin network's functionalities *and* dysfunctionalities, successes *and* shortfalls on display; and these ambiguities are not simply exposed to the family itself, but to friends, neighbours, and even strangers. Just as parties draw together all of the kinship ideals we have previously discussed, they echo the linked sources of *dikgang*: the organisation and management of space, and movement to and through it; contributions of material resources (especially food) and of work; silence and

speech, visibility and knowability. And their danger is exacerbated in the public display that the event involves.

To the extent that these dangers are anticipated throughout the planning process, holding parties like the one described above deliberately invites risk and danger into the yard and the very heart of the family. In this sense, celebrations at home perform familial success by setting it a sort of test. The cohesiveness and strength of the family is implicitly proven in its ability to absorb and withstand the *dikgang* that their invitees – incorporating the full range of their extended families as well as friends, neighbours, and colleagues – present. And the family is given a unique opportunity to identify and deal explicitly with such problems as emerge in the process (like Dipuo's intransigence).

Notably, however, unlike pregnancies and marriage arrangements, parties do *not* involve any explicit, public negotiation or resolution of these risks. *Dikgang*, and the means of their resolution, are obscured, concealed and kept to specific members of the hosting family. I suggest that it is in this containment of problems and their resolution that parties work to define the limits of family. The management of *dikgang*, in other words, does not simply extend the possibilities of kinship *ad*

infinitum, but draws its boundaries, too. In spite of the kin-like contributions and behaviours expected of guests – in readying the yard, in making



Party guests sit at the edge of the lelwapa. (Photo: author)

contributions, in the preparation, cooking and serving of food, in the eating and cleaning up, or in giving gifts, all of which we have seen featured in kin-making –

the party is decidedly *not* a means of extending kinship. Instead, it restricts kinship, performs these restrictions publicly – and defines the public by virtue of that exclusion. At the same time, a certain hierarchy of relationship between the family and that public is established. To the extent that the family demonstrates its capacity to extend its reach to distant relatives, friends, neighbours, and other community members – in mobilising resources and labour, in providing food, in accommodating, in calling and in sending, and so forth – while containing the dangers that arise from that extension, it demonstrates a certain power that goes beyond self-sufficiency to draw others into relationships of care and obligation. This process of defining kin and community against one another, and of establishing the priority of the former in generating the politics of the latter, is one way in which we might better understand *motse o lwapeng*, the village is in the home.

There are, of course, concomitant processes or attempts at re-aligning the relationships internal to the family, too (though they were more experimental, and in this case rather less successful). I suggest that the party's consistent echo of wedding celebrations – in a context where none of the siblings were married and in which the family's attempts to negotiate marriage had been so frustrated – indicates a certain innovative assertion of personhood on the siblings' behalf. Dipuo's public reproach of their filial failures, in this reading, comes across more as a rejection of that particular claim than a wilful exposure of his family to public censure (though it also had to be handled as the latter). Notably, Dipuo did not dissuade his children from throwing the party in the first place, nor attempt to divide them or turn them against one another, though he did in other situations (see Chapter Two); indeed, he encouraged their display of togetherness, and of harmonious co-operation, both explicitly and in providing them with a common cause to rail against. What he seemed to reject were the claims the siblings were making: the claim that the process of raising them was complete, and that they were therefore fully-fledged adults; or the claim that they were self-sufficient enough to re-marry their parents, as it were, thereby both divesting themselves of further responsibilities to the pair, and celebrating themselves and their ascension into a new social role accordingly. Whether by pointedly wearing the shoes and claiming the gifts given him by his

married, established nieces and nephews, and preferring them as his family, or by rejecting the presents given by his own children and shaming them in his speech as inadequate children (much less adults), Dipuo repeatedly refused to acknowledge these new claims on personhood as equivalent to those acquired through marriage, building, and other more traditional routes. And his refusal – combined with his wife's frustrations in not having a daughter-in-law she could send to make invitations, or in being disappointed both by a child she had raised and by her *malome* – suggests a further implication: that the attainment of full personhood on the part of Dipuo and Mmapula had also been inhibited by their and their children's failures to secure reciprocal obligations among kin, marriages, and so on, all of which were put on display over the course of the party's organisation.

Awareness of the mutual implications of parents' and children's aspirations to personhood leads us to another way in which boundaries internal to the family were being re-negotiated during the party: in terms of intergenerational relationships. The impression that the siblings were marrying their parents, noted by guests at the event, discomfited Dipuo in particular not simply for its untoward claim of full personhood on the part of his children, but for the inversion of generational order it suggested. Of course, this particular inversion has plentiful precedent in Tswana custom: historically, sons could pay *lobola* (bridewealth) for their mothers in the absence or after the death of their fathers, partly to ensure their own legitimacy (Schapera 1933). But this customary practice suggests the need to replace a father, where *lobola* debts have been unpaid and marriage negotiations unsuccessful. Given that Dipuo was not only present, but had paid *lobola* and successfully negotiated his own marriage (as well as those of others), his overt resistance to that interpretation of the party begins to make sense. His refusal to wear clothes provided for him as might be provided by a parent to a child, and his emphasis on how many quality gifts he had been able to acquire through the superior filial bonds he had crafted with his nieces and nephews, both marked resistance to his children's apparent attempt to undermine and claim his authority. As we have seen elsewhere in the thesis, however, Dipuo's authority tended to be most visible not in his provision of goods or support for his family, but in his role as conflict-negotiator. Indeed, in underlining his achievements as a

malome to his nieces and nephews, his success in negotiating their marriages and his ongoing responsibility for conflict-management in their relationships, he was asserting the validity of his claim to authority primarily in those terms (regardless of such failures as may have affected his own children, which implicitly became their responsibility). To some extent, Dipuo also seems to have been reinforcing the uniqueness of this authority by *creating* problems that his children could not resolve, nor call upon anyone else to assist them in resolving.

Ultimately, Dipuo's children seemed to recognise and accept their failure, in spite of the success of the party itself. They did not call the old man to account, as one might do with a wayward dependent or someone over whom one had established some authority, and they did not pursue the matter with anyone else. While the party held out the possibility of creating different forms of personhood for the siblings and their parents, and different intergenerational relationships as well, it also reinforced the limits on that self-making. It generated the means to engage and negotiate tensions between the preservation of family unity and the promotion of individual members' self-making projects; but also between ensuring the progressive intergenerational transmission of authority, and retaining intergenerational hierarchies and the claims of obligation and support they enable. These tensions, and the ways in which they could be negotiated, became most apparent in the *kgang* of Dipuo's intransigences, and the ways in which the crisis it provoked was ultimately handled by his children.

As in previous chapters, then, attempts to assert and enable personhood while retaining responsibility to the family, or to enable the progression of generations while preserving hierarchies, are a source of *dikgang*; and *dikgang* in turn enable a tenuous balance to be struck between those otherwise contradictory imperatives. What the example of the party underlines is the importance of an explicitly public audience or context in this process. Building (Chapter One), cars and *metshelo* (Chapter Two), pregnancy, marriage, and the emergence of intimate relationships (Chapter Three), and the care of others' children (Chapter Four) all take both their riskiness and their salience to personhood not simply from recognition among kin, but from their apprehension by a wider, specifically non-kin audience as well.

Of course, it is not only families, or family-run celebrations, that set the limits of and terms of engagement between kin and community. In the following section, I consider the ways in which relationships between family, village, and *morafe* (loosely, tribe) are negotiated by the *kgotla*, or customary court – here, in the context of the first men’s initiation to be held in over thirty years.

Lifting up Culture: A Homecoming

“...the duty of the regiments is not to beat people but to help out in the village.”

-Kgosi (Chief) Tsimane, quoted in *The Midweek Sun* (16th July, 2012)

It was a warm afternoon in early September, and hundreds of people from the surrounding villages had gathered at the main *kgotla*, or customary court. Anyone who could get away from work and make the trip into the district’s main village, Maropeng – which was the heart of the *morafe*, or tribe – had come to welcome back the first *mophato* (age regiment) to be initiated in over a generation. People had been milling around the stone walls of the *kgotla* since late morning, exchanging greetings and speculating on when the initiates would arrive and how the afternoon would unfold. The *mophato*’s return had been greatly anticipated since they’d left a month previously, and the initiation had been the subject of frequent conversations both at home and around the district in the interim. Mmapula and Dipuo had both been initiated, as had many other elders in the village; but anyone younger had learned what little they knew about initiation from stories and schoolbooks, and many were acutely curious. For perhaps the first time in my fieldwork, everyone was as confused as I was about what was supposed to happen and what it all meant; and our collectively bewildered excitement lent the day an air of festive camaraderie.

No-one seemed sure about why the initiations had been discontinued in the first place. Almost every other tribe in Botswana had ceased running initiations in the colonial era – generally at the behest of the missions and newly converted chiefs

(Schapera 1955: 105-6) – if with intermittent, short-lived revivals. Some tribes, however, continued to initiate age regiments, alternately of men and women, through the colonial era (1955: 106) and into the early 1980s (Midweek Sun 2012). Official rationales for the disruption provided to local media outlets by the paramount chief's office focused on recurrent drought and South Africa's political instability in the 1980s, which had a habit of spilling over the nearby border (ibid.). Anti-apartheid activists frequently sought safe haven in Botswana's border towns, of which the district's main village was one, or in the empty stretches of bush between them – like the one in which the local tribe's initiations were held. The South African army had mounted attacks targeting these activists even into the heart of the capital with apparent impunity. In other words, the incursion of political violence and instability derailed local initiations (a striking contrast with Bloch's paradigmatic Orokaiva, for whom the possibility of political violence was a precondition of initiation [Bloch 1992: 19]). The unrest, of course, had died down long since; but the initiations had not been revived in the interim. The re-emergence of initiations during my fieldwork was rationalised explicitly in terms of concern for the moral fibre of tribal and family life – often framed in terms of corruption, degradation, and the inability to run families properly (Midweek Sun 2012) – of which AIDS was cast as one of many symptoms, though not a cause. Specifically, initiation was intended as a means of promoting *botho* – literally, 'personhood', but more broadly a powerful moral standard of dignity, humaneness, respect and civility – as an antidote to these iniquities.

I do not propose, in this section, to attempt a full analysis of Tswana initiation – much less on the basis of a single homecoming celebration. However, following Bloch (1992), I take it that the reintegration stage of such a rite of passage might be especially illustrative of its political legacies and implications, and may therefore have the most to tell us about the relationships between family and *morafe* that I suggest initiation mediates. And certainly, given that rituals like initiation have been variously understood in terms of mediating the dangers of transformation, or creating cohesion among otherwise conflictual and fissive groups and people (Turner 1967;

Van Gennep 1960), they provide an appropriate counterpoint to the discussion of crisis in kinship we have pursued thus far.

I suggest that initiation echoes kinship in the sense that such capacity as it may have for asserting continuity through transformative times comes from creating disturbances, producing conflict, crisis, and even violence (Bloch 1992) – a sort of *dikgang*. As in families, I suspect that for the Tswana the meaning of links forged between *bagwera*, or initiates, are at least in part derived from their joint management of these issues. Certainly, Schapera's (1938: 104-117) records of the contributions of work and things expected of the *mophato*, and of relationships between initiates, echo kinship dynamics described in this thesis; and so, too, do the *dikgang* that emerge (1938: 113-115). And given that, as we have seen, Tswana self-making relies in some extent on accumulating *dikgang*, it stands to reason that an initiation should provide opportunity of specifically that sort. Having not been privy to any detailed experience or account of the month the men spent in the bush – no doubt divergent from the norm described by Schapera over sixty years ago – these suggestions are, however, necessarily conjectural.

What is clearer from the homecoming itself, and the tales told there, is that much like the family party above, initiation is *not* understood to extend kinship. At the same time, for all that the role of family is formally obscured, kinship is not irrelevant to initiation, either. In this section, I want to suggest that while common framings of the local initiation – much like the classic literature on initiation – focused on producing moral personhood and a strong *morafe*, and obscured the role of kin, it nevertheless relied heavily upon the involvement of families. For all that kin were formally excluded from the production and resolution of danger and *dikgang* in all phases of the initiation, they nonetheless saw themselves as thoroughly implicated in the initiates' management of those *dikgang* in practice, and bore responsibility for the legacies of those *dikgang* upon the initiates' return home. A family's sponsorship of an initiate, in the range of contributions it requires, provokes additional *dikgang* at home as well (compare Chapter Two) – the careful management of which is as critical to the initiate's success as his behaviour while away. The obscured

involvement of kin, I argue, asserts boundaries between family and *morafe*, and enables the articulation of specific relationships between them – hiding the former, and promoting the latter. This dynamic is usually understood to illustrate the transcendence of the tribe over the family, such the political sphere supercedes and encompasses the domestic. Perhaps counterintuitively, I suggest that these relationships indicate the possibility of a different reading, more comparable to the one I have given for the family party described above – whereby kinship is not simply encompassed, but also remains encompassing.

The initiation was carefully veiled in secrecy, and initiates – past and present – were explicitly forbidden from discussing what the process entailed. But between pestering the old folks at home, prompting their age-mates among our neighbours, and considerable speculation, we had cobbled together a few ideas. The grandparents explained that the men would learn the history of the tribe, and its songs and practices – though, based on the send-off event, Mmapula was concerned they’d be learning generic Setswana songs rather than those particular to the Balete tribe. They would learn to hunt. Rra Ditaui, our neighbour and builder, had tipped us off that initiates also learned minor witchcraft – of the sort that was necessary to protect oneself, one’s cattle and family, or to identify and divert malicious threats and attacks sent by others. And, in keeping with past practice (Schapera 1955: 106), the men would be circumcised and ‘doctored’ with herbs thereafter – though official statements on the current initiation had carefully aligned themselves with the Safe Male Circumcision campaigns to curtail HIV/AIDS, and noted that trained doctors would be involved (Midweek Sun 2012). When they returned, the initiates would be men, and would be recognised as able to marry – initiates were congratulated with shouts of *O tla nyala!* You will marry! – though many had married and had children long since. In fact, the initiates ranged in age from their early twenties to their late forties, there having been no initiations for so long.

None of the men at home had opted to participate. Tuelo, the youngest, had originally planned to go along, and apparently had attended preparatory meetings; but at the last minute he backed out. Kagiso was adamantly uninterested; “*Ga ke*

motho wa dilo tse,” he said dismissively – I’m not a person for these things, implying that with their dalliances in witchcraft and tradition they were inappropriate for a born-again Christian. Modiri and Moagi registered no particular interest. Oratile and Kelebogile were ambivalent when toying with the idea of participating in the womens’ initiation planned for the following year. Kelebogile was up for the idea until her mother told her she had had to sit quietly next to poisonous snakes, at which point Kelebogile changed her mind abruptly. Neither Mmapula nor Dipuo put any pressure on their children to participate; indeed, both official discourse and village chat seemed to stress the importance of initiates choosing to participate for themselves, though they required a fairly hefty ongoing sponsorship from their families (to which we will return below). Only Mmapula’s *malome* from the main village – or rather the son of her *malome*, who had inherited the responsibility on the death of his father – had decided to participate. We were hoping to find him among the men at the homecoming.

By early afternoon, word had spread that the *mophato* would soon arrive. The milling spectators converged on the main road into the *kgotla* in anticipation, their camera-phones readied, jostling one another with an air of companionable merriment. Someone wedged herself through the crowd to stand next to me. I glanced up, surprised to find Mmabontle casting me a mischevious look. She was an old friend from Dithaba with whom I had worked at the orphan care centre for some time, but hardly the first person I’d expected to see there. I asked whether she had come specifically to see the *mophato*.

“*Ee*, I’m here for Tharo,” she explained. I was confused. Tharo was a young man we both knew from the orphan care project, but then we both knew plenty of young men that way, and it seemed an odd reason for her to come all the way to the main village. “Don’t you know we’re related?” she said slyly, knowing the discovery would shock me. She explained that after doing some research into a ‘small house’, or unofficial second family, her father had had, she discovered the link. “My father was his grandfather. Anyway,” she glossed, with her characteristic nonchalance, “when we heard Tharo was to be initiated, we contributed to buy a cow. *Nna* I bought him

blankets, and contributed for some food,” she added, referencing costs incurred during the initiation itself. It was a surprisingly generous contribution, given that Mmabontle was already looking after her own and her sister’s children on a fairly meagre income. Tharo’s older sister had complained bitterly to me of the initiation’s expense a week previously, calculating the combined cost of food, blankets, shoes, and the shorts, beads and creams with which the men decorated themselves on their return at well over P3,000 (£250) – more than most reasonably-employed people in Dithaba made in a month. The cost had been a source of some strife at home, making Mmabontle’s contributions – which would have added another P1,000 (£85) at least – timely. “*Hei!* They don’t tell you how expensive these things are in the beginning,” Mmabontle said. “You just see them coming to you saying they need more money to feed *mogwera* (the initiate). Even these boys they don’t know how much it costs. But what can you do? It’s the family that has to pay. If the boy wants to be initiated, you see what to do. Look, I made him a purse,” she added, showing me a small drawstrung pouch she had sewn from scraps of cloth to give to him for collecting coins from people who wished to speak to him that day.

As we chatted, older men in blue work overalls and hats moved towards us up the road, pacing back and forth and snapping long sticks against the pavement like whips to clear the route. The spectators moved quickly out of the way; the initiators were rumoured to thrash people if the occasion demanded it. Then we heard ululations and excitement from the top of the road, and in the distance, above the heads of the crowd, we saw handkerchiefs dancing on the ends of long staffs. Before long the *mophato* was trooping past us, each man covered completely in new, heavy blankets, incongruous with their floral prints. It was impossible to see any man’s face, much less recognise him. One initiate was driven by in a car, the rumour chasing up the line behind him that he was ill.

The men were herded into the cattle kraal attached to the main *kgotla*, the high walls of which made it impossible for them to be seen. Anyone who tried to climb something nearby to get a look was angrily chased off by one of the initiators. No-one was admitted into the *kgotla*, and so we all waited around in some confusion.

Eventually smaller groups of men – still bundled head-to-toe in blankets – began to emerge from every exit, heading off in different directions. The crowd scattered, people running to attach themselves to one group or another, following behind them with enthusiasm. I lost Mmabontle, and like many others, followed this group, and then tagged after that, clueless about what was happening until someone explained to me that each group was going back to its home *kgotla* – of which each neighbourhood in the sprawling village had its own.

Lorato joined me soon after to try to find Mmapula's *malome* (whom the whole family took as *malome* as well). No-one seemed entirely sure in which *kgotla* they might find their relatives, nor even where the neighbourhood *kgotlas* were. Some simply followed the initiates themselves, though there was no way to recognise anyone unless you knew – having bought – their blanket. After many phonecalls home to Dithaba for suggestions, we eventually traced our *malome* to a yard in the neighbourhood Mmapula and Dipuo had grown up in. There was no obvious *kgotla* in the area, but we surmised the yard must have been that of the headman. Like many larger yards in Maropeng, it had a thatched rondavel, which had been requisitioned for the men; and the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, had been partitioned and enclosed with a fence of thin hedge branches. We greeted the hosts and elders perched around the edge of the *lelwapa*, most of whom were familiar from past funerals and weddings I had attended. A man sitting in the entrance tried to demand money from everyone who entered, in exchange for the right to speak to the initiates – an act of contribution that would be repeated the following day – but people obliged irregularly.

The initiates were ranged inside with their backs to the thin fence and their legs drawn up, looking tired and ragged, clothed only in cut-off shorts. The gatekeeper told us to greet everyone quickly and move out, but at the insistence of our uncle and a couple of his friends we sat in front of them to chat awhile. To my surprise, I found Tharo there among them too, grinning and asking me to bring him a bottle of Coke the next day as he had been craving it so long. As we chatted, it became clear that most of the other men had been connected to the ward through family history (rather

than current residence). Given that wards were historically settled virilocally, that congruence suggested that most of the men would have been related in one way or another. Specific relationships between them were somewhat opaque, however. Given his presence there, I wondered whether Tharo was also a distant relative of the Legae family, as well as Mmabontle's; but no-one seemed to know.

We were back in Maropeng again the next morning to see the official welcoming and naming of the *mophato* by the paramount chief. The *kgotla* was packed: the large, thatched stage was crammed with dignitaries, and rafters erected around the open meeting area were jammed with people standing and sitting, many having clambered

up on to walls and the roofs of vehicles. The initiated men came trooping in from the various corners of the village at a stomping trot, kicking up clouds of dust



The mophato returns. (Photo: author)

around their jostling staffs, glistening red with a mixture of soil and Vaseline they had applied to their bodies. Their hair had been shaved to their scalps and coloured back in, sharp-edged and black. Cheap beads draped diagonally across their chests rattled. Some blew on the hollowed, twisting horns of *kudu* antelopes, symbols of a successful hunt. Their initiators circled them with thrashing whips, keeping the crowd back, herding the men back into the cattle kraal, where they stood out of sight until being called in front of the chief.

The official programme of the event unfolded in something of a blur, everyone jostling for space and talking excitedly over top of one another. It was uncharacteristically brief. Unlike *kgotla* events for Independence Day and other celebrations – which usually featured long-winded speeches from district bureaucrats, local counsellors and members of parliament, the chief, pastors, and whomever else might be available – only the chief spoke. She named the *mophato* ‘*Matsosangwao*’ – ‘those who lift up culture’ – emphasising the importance of rediscovering culture as a route to dignity and *botho* (lit. personhood; fig. humanity, dignity, and respect). She described the historic importance of *mephato* in defending the village, and later in advancing development projects for the community’s benefit; and she emphasised the initiates’ new-won status, and the civic responsibilities that went with it, urging them to work for the betterment of the village and to support one another in times of need. The crowd listened half-heartedly and impatiently. When the ceremony concluded, the men were trooped back to their neighbourhood *kgotlas*, from there to return to their homes. The men from Dithaba and other, farther villages stayed the night, and undertook the entire event again on a smaller scale in their home communities on the following day.

This series of events around the *mophato*’s return suggests an interpolation of the village into the role of the family in the process of self-making. Calling, sending, and moving the initiates to stay together, and drawing them into the work of cattle-herding, hunting, and cooking; requiring contributions of money, food, and labour; teaching them about sexual and marital relationships, and rendering them recognisably marriageable – all of these aims resonate with the responsibilities of kin explored across this thesis, and imply a positioning of the *kgotla* that supersedes the family. In a context where other means of self-making – specifically pregnancy and marriage – are so fraught and difficult to achieve, and in the case of marriage even prone to reversal (Comaroff and Roberts 1977), this reading is especially tempting. And yet, the fact that the *mophato* included both married and unmarried men, with and without children, settled with families or otherwise – coupled with its long suspension – suggests that in this case initiation is perhaps less critical to self-making

than we might expect. For the Balete, I suggest that initiation was not understood simply as a stage in the life cycle prior to marriage, but as an additional, alternative, and experimental means of self-making. That none of the men at home felt obliged to participate – especially those, like Kagiso, with confidence in the ways they were already self-making (through business, marriage negotiation, and so on) – underscores the extent to which initiation, revisited after so many years, was more an optional and alternative approach than a necessary pre-requisite to personhood.

There was, nonetheless, some effort to assert the priority of this means of self-making. During the entire month that the *mophato* was out in the bush, weddings and parties were banned, bars were asked to close early and churches were asked to keep their services quiet (a gesture that suggests, perhaps, the comparable roles of each in the making of persons – see Suggs 2002 on bars and making men). For two nights before the *mophato* returned, a village-wide curfew and blackout was maintained. Indeed, when I accidentally came within sight (at a fair distance) of the blanketed initiates at the edge of the village on the morning of their first return, I was met with angry shouts and aggressively-waved whips until I retreated. The emphasis on maintaining silence, invisibility and secrecy for the duration of the initiation, and on the gradual, controlled process of revealing or emergence thereafter – as the men returned to the village first covered in blankets, then in partly-obscured *malwapa* (courtyards) scattered all over the village, then resplendent in red body-cream and beads at the main *kgotla* – is reminiscent of the emergence into recognition that pregnancy provokes, a permanent sort of recognition to which men otherwise have no access (see Chapter Three).

And indeed, the family seems to be sidelined in this process. Unlike the careful description of relationships that characterised the party – whether during invitations, speeches, or introductions among guests – the homecoming seems to obscure and understate kin networks. No-one is quite sure where the initiates are going when they leave the *kgotla*; when they arrive in the yards of familiar (and familial) wards, no-one is quite sure whether or how they all relate, and no effort is made to describe those relationships. Family must queue with everyone else to see their initiates, and

should pay to speak with them; the men eat separately, and are kept separate. The initiates are powerful and dangerous together, and pose a threat to everyone equally. Speeches focus on the men's achievements and responsibilities, their new roles in the community and their new relationships to one another, rather than to kin.

Notably – though it may be that kin-like bonds are cultivated among initiates during their segregation, and while kin-like expectations of contribution, work, or assistance at weddings and funerals hold between initiates and may be called upon by the *kgotla* after initiation – initiates do *not* become kin. Nor does initiation serve to extend kinship across the *morafe*. There are echoes, here, of the ways that party attendees are drawn into kin responsibilities, but excluded from being kin (though initiates' joint experiences of *dikgang* would far outstrip those of party attendees, and might be reminiscent of those faced by the siblings). Part of this exclusion is linked to the importance of recognition (by kin) in making relationships *kin* relationships (Chapter Three). I suggest that the hiding of the family's role in initiation is a major factor in ensuring that the links between initiates and among their families are not rendered kin relationships. To the extent that individual initiates and their families do not become visible, audible, or known to other initiates' families, and to which they are not drawn into one another's *dikgang* – which the obscurings noted above effectively prevent – they are not made kin.

Even more importantly for our present purposes, such *dikgang* as emerge in the phase of segregation must be resolved in that phase; there are no means of suspension or continued negotiation once the initiates have returned (which we would expect to find among families). And yet, many of the *dikgang* that do emerge leave legacies to be taken on by initiates' kin. The sick man who came back from the bush by car – reputedly fallen ill because of a reaction to the herbs to which the men were exposed in learning minor witchcraft – was nursed for a week by his family, until he died, leaving open the possibility of whether he or the family had been targeted for attack, and by whom. A question of bewitchment is not, importantly, a question that the *mophato* or even the *kgotla* can properly navigate; like other cycles

of *dikgang*, it is best navigated among kin (who are also, of course, most likely to be the source of the problem).

At the same time, as narratives like Mmabontle's suggest – and they were common currency among spectators as we waited for the *mophato*'s return, trying to piece together what was unfolding – kin are critical to an initiate's success at any given phase of initiation. A family must be willing and able to cobble together money, food, clothing, and other resources sufficient not only to send the initiate off, but to address immediately any need expressed by his initiators in his name during the initiation, and to welcome him home again as well – often with parties of their own. Indeed, as we saw in the example of Mmabontle's newfound kinship with Tharo, who constitutes an initiate's family becomes evident in who contributes to his sponsorship and upkeep, who clothes him for his homecoming, who takes him gifts upon his return, who throws him a party, and so on – such that initiation both relies on kinship, and becomes a kin-making process as well. And, as we have seen, each of these expectations are likely sources of *dikgang* among kin, which must be managed sufficiently to ensure they do not disrupt the initiate's chances (while reproducing kinship in the process). In supporting a man's initiation, his family demonstrates its ability to co-operate, to provide, and to sustain its members in their self-making – opening opportunities of marriageability and the reproduction of the family in its turn. And the initiate demonstrates his ability to mobilise this support.

Family – and specifically the *lelwapa* – also has an especially critical role to play in reintegrating the *mophato*. As is characteristic of many initiations, the initiated men are considered dangerous when they return from their isolation in the bush. They have great potential to cause damage – hence the preparatory interventions of witchcraft to ease their return into the village, the distance at which people are kept as the *mophato* travels to the *kgotla*, their covering in thick blankets, and so forth. And, of course, they pass through the *kgotla* – or, at least, its cattle kraal – first. But then they are returned homewards – specifically to one *lelwapa* in their ancestral wards, which, given that they were usually settled by kin, returned the men to perhaps their widest historical network of family and thereby threw their (pre-

existing) kin relations into relief. Those who could find them there were those who shared and knew those relationships, or were able to discover them (as we did) from family; alternatively, they were those who – being family – had provided the men's blankets and could identify and follow them accordingly. As such, those who visited the initiates, and contributed money to speak with them – a gesture of re-establishing the economies of contribution described in Chapter Two, perhaps, acknowledging that the initiates had accumulated a new sort of value – also tended to represent the widest possible range of family. It is in the space of the *lelwapa* that the men bathe, shave, and beautify themselves in preparation for their recognition as a *mophato* the following day, in a sort of preliminary domestic transformation that will allow them to move from the kraal of the *kgotla* to its central arena. The *lelwapa*, in other words, is a key space both for containing and mitigating the danger the new initiates present, and for rendering them safe again – for re-domesticating them, as it were. After their initial return, and before they can be named and officially recognised by the chief, the age-regiment is literally in the *lelwapa*; and in that sense, so too is the political construct of the *morafe*, much as the village is in the *lelwapa* in the proverb at the opening of this chapter. Even when formally obscured, then, the *lelwapa* retains a certain unexpectedly encompassing significance and role.

The unfolding of the homecoming ceremony is suggestive of other ways in which the family and the *kgotla* come to relate, as well. After a man's initiation, the *kgotla* acquires a certain narrow access to his family – a right to call him to service or work, and to demand contributions from him and his kin (as do a man's co-initiates). And it is drawn into a narrow, kin-like connection in turn – especially whereby it may be called upon to address and resolve intractable family conflicts and disputes. But the limits on these mutual involvements – like the temporary wall erected to contain the newly-returned initiates in the *lelwapa* – are equally clear. The *kgotla*, for example, does not enter into family conflicts without being called to do so (usually as a last resort), and seldom accesses the space of the home at all. Even historically, it did not force initiates to leave paid work or neglect their obligations to plough and harvest in order to undertake the work of the village (Schapera 1938: 110). In this sense, the

priority of the family is respected, but also tapped to enhance the political weight and capacity of the *kgotla*, recognising a mutual dependency between the two.

In this process, I would argue that it is not simply the initiate who acquires new status. Nor, to use Bloch's (1992) terms, is it only the politico-social totality that gains transcendence through initiation. Behind the scenes, kin are drawn into the production of that transcendence, and become critical factors in achieving it. In some sense, the family is thus *also* rendered transcendent, *as kin* (a possibility Bloch himself seems to suggest; 1992: 17). The transcendence of the initiate and of the *morafe*, in other words, both seem to rely on and reproduce a parallel, encompassing transcendence in the *lelwapa*, or household. Rather than simply enabling the *morafe* to supersede the *lelwapa*, initiation underscores ways in which the *lelwapa* continues to encompass the *morafe*, establishing an uneasy tension between the two.

Conclusion

In the grandparents' party and the return of the *mophato*, I have suggested two perspectives on the creation and mediation of specific relationships between the family and the community. In each event, the dynamics of *dikgang* allowed us to trace the processes by which these distinctions and connections were negotiated. In each, these *dikgang* were linked not only to defining the sphere of kin, but to the production of creative opportunities for self-making, or the accumulation of personhood. And these projects of personhood were intimately linked with the ways in which each event asserted boundaries within and between the family, the village, and the tribe – the *lelwapa*, the *motse* and the *morafe* – and relationships between them that positioned the family as surprisingly encompassing and productive of the community.

Not only is the village in the home, then, as the opening proverb of this chapter suggests; the *morafe* is also in the home, and in many ways its political life is rooted there. Indeed, the permanence and meaning of the political sphere of both village and

morafe seems bound to draw upon the permanence and meaning of the family. In this sense, the Tswana public mirrors the Tswana person – it is brought into being through, but in marked tension with, the family.

When the men's initiation was held, it was framed by the paramount chief explicitly as a cultural revival. On their return, the men, too, rationalised their participation in terms of reclaiming culture. What the chief or initiates meant or sought by 'reclaiming culture' is a question that goes well beyond the scope of this chapter. However, based on the arguments presented above, I suggest that part of what was being reclaimed was a particular relationship between the political or public sphere and families, the shape and limits of which had been blurred over years of increasing programmatic interventionism on the part of public agencies.

In the next chapter, I build on these reflections about the relationship between Tswana kinship and politics by considering the ways in which national and transnational political spheres interact with and relate to Tswana families in the context of AIDS. I suggest that what we might understand as the purely public, political spheres of government ministries and agencies, local NGOs, or international civil society and donor groups are also driven by kin dynamics – both in their internal workings, their inter-relationships, and their programme delivery. Their work and workplaces, in other words, are caught up in projects of domestication. However, they assume a distance and precedence over kin dynamics, and seek to establish it in part by asserting authority over – and attempting to remake – the family. Close attention to the *dikgang* that emerge in these parallel projects demonstrates ways in which such agencies are drawn into the work of kinship, but excluded as kin actors – rendering their projects prone to failure. It also illustrates an underlying multiplicity of kinship ideals and practices guiding these agencies, from a wide variety of socio-cultural sources, which sit uncomfortably together and occasionally come into conflict with one another.

Chapter Six

Creating Kin: Families, Nations, and Transnational Organisations

“This week, Batswana have welcomed into their family twenty-nine ambassadors from Canada. In diplomatic work, relations can be nurtured at personal level; nation-states are composed of individuals, and the international system is composed of nation-states, so it follows that individual relations facilitate better international relations.”

The Deputy Permanent Secretary for Botswana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stood at a makeshift podium, incongruous in his sharp business suit among the trees. Flanking him to his right sat a small phalanx of similarly well-dressed officials, suited or uniformed, the women wearing high heels in spite of the deep sand. To his left ran a long, open white tent, under which a handful of more elite personages sat on office chairs at long tables covered in cloth and Botswana-blue bunting, fronted by an impressive display of baskets, gourds, and woven mats. Facing the tent, across an open performance area, three rows of Canadian high school students wearing tailored shirts and skirts of blue German-print cloth shifted uncomfortably in small

iron chairs brought from a local primary school for the occasion.

Everyone else – a crowd of people from the nearest village, including elders, young men and



The opening ceremony. (Photo: author)

women, and gaggles of children to whom the speaker gestured inclusively but vaguely as ‘the community’ – sat and stood around the edges, behind the ranks of

officials and Canadians. Children darted in to check the proceedings, and back out to play in the surrounding bush.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary was outlining the President's goals for national development, and appreciating the Canadian group for situating their work so well within them. "That these students can demonstrate this kind of love and care for other human beings gives me hope that coming generations will inherit a more caring world," he continued. "I wish to pay a special tribute to the parents of these young people...we hold in high esteem parents who can allow their small children to travel to a far place and live among strangers for a week." He spun together development goals, love and care, inheritance, global humanitarianism, parenthood and cultural exchange as effortlessly as he had envisioned ambassadors in families in his opening lines. His audience listened impassively.

We were an unlikely group in an unlikely spot. We sat in a semi-cleared, wooded area next to a deep, dry riverbed, tucked behind a range of unusual rock formations in a remote corner of the country. A well-established NGO, partnered with Social Services, had acquired the area as a campsite in which to host its therapeutic retreats for orphaned children. Its programme had been modelled explicitly on the tradition of initiation which had long since lapsed in most of the areas the NGO served, including Dithaba; a group of children participating together from one community were even called *mophato* (age regiment). The retreats were also cast explicitly in proposals as a means of "creating kin". I had helped broker the government's partnership with the NGO in my previous incarnation at Social Services (see Introduction), and had attended trainings and part of a retreat in the past. The programme now spanned the country, and was being implemented by government social workers in half of the nation's districts. It had already enjoyed a long history in Dithaba, where the NGO had been working with many of the children and families I knew for years.

The Canadian students, looking alternately bored and bewildered as the speeches continued, had fundraised to help build a meeting-hall – modelled on a *kgotla*

(customary court), to be used for ceremonies – for the new site. They'd come for a week to help finish its construction before making a short tour of the country, and an agreement had been struck to mark the occasion with an official opening event. And so, a remarkable number of senior civil servants – from the tribal administration and schools in the nearby village; the District Council and Land Board, in the main town a couple hours' drive away; and the Department of Social Services, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Local Government in distant Gaborone – had found their ways along the red, sandy roads and down the narrow track that led into the site. Many had come a day's drive from the capital; and some had come during the week to camp and help with the work of finishing the site and preparing for the event, much as they might have done for a wedding or funeral. The head of the country's orphan care programme had even been tasked with chaperoning the Canadian group for their entire stay. As I'd enjoyed long-standing relationships with both Social Services and the NGO, and being Canadian too, I was invited to tag along.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary finished his speech, and made way for the first of six local choirs performing that day. Dressed in matching T-shirts emblazoned with the choir name, they danced and sang their way in to the performance area to the shouts and ululations of the audience, some of whom came forward to dance with them in encouragement. The choir, singing a greeting song for *bagolo* (the elders), faced the podium and tent initially – until an enterprising social worker, no doubt noticing the disappointed expressions of the Canadian contingent, induced them to shift so that they could be seen by everyone at the same time. They sang, '*Modimo, o thusa bana ga ba na batsadi*' – God, help the children without parents. It was the first reference to the children for whom the campsite had been built. The song painted a vivid picture of orphans' helplessness, vulnerability, and isolation, and the threat they posed to the nation's future. The choir sang boldly and danced energetically, at one point prostrating themselves – as if they were the helpless children about whom they sang – until a well-dressed man came forward from the ranks of dignitaries to drop cash in the dirt in front of them. They refused to go on performing until money had been left by others as well, at which point they gathered it up triumphantly, ululating.

The story I have told about Tswana kinship so far has gravitated around the home – much as families themselves gravitate around the *lelwapa*, the courtyard with which they are identified. As we have seen across the thesis, social workers and NGOs – and the programmes of intervention they run – have claimed an increasingly prominent role in that context, with mixed success. These agencies and the families they serve, I have suggested, adhere to a certain common logic and practice that links them. Both agencies and families recognise the importance of enabling and managing movement, for example; both prioritise building as an important gesture of self-making and kin-making; and both locate care, in part, in the provision of specific sorts of material goods (food, clothing, cash, and so on). Both are concerned with managing the recognition of relationships (as we will see further below); both take the care and circulation of children as a primary responsibility; and both rely on the public performance of success to solidify their relative priority in relation to one another. At the same time, the preceding chapters have detailed ways in which social work and NGO practice serve to disrupt, invert, and muddle Tswana kinship practice in each of these spheres: knocking it out of sync, over-extending or collapsing its boundaries, in some cases working to replace it altogether. And these disruptions and divergences have been most evident in the sort of *dikgang* (conflicts, risks or issues) that arise, and the family’s means of addressing them.

In this chapter, I turn to a more sustained consideration of the dynamics at work within and between Social and Community Development (S&CD, or social work) offices, NGO projects, and the government ministries and international donors that fund and oversee them. I follow the lead of Susan McKinnon and Fennella Cannell (2013), who call attention to the “persistent life” of kinship in the economic, political, and religious projects of ‘modern’ states, corporations, churches, and other agencies. And I interrogate the extent to which Tswana kinship ideals and practice are discernible in the internal workings of government and NGO offices, or in their interactions with one another. Following on from my conclusions in Chapter Five, I ask whether other kinship values may be discerned in those spaces as well. Finally, I

question whether government and NGO programmes that attempt to encompass the family may in fact be encompassed by it.

In making this argument, I seek to address the lacunae identified in the Introduction between the anthropological analyses of development, humanitarianism, and kinship. As I noted there, the causes and repercussions of AIDS are frequently framed in both humanitarian and development terms; and NGOs and government agencies addressing the pandemic cast their responses in both discourses as well. In earlier chapters – and in the choir’s performance above – we have seen that concern over the collapse of the family sits at the heart of these frameworks. Any attempt to understand families in a time of AIDS, I have argued, requires an understanding of development and humanitarian interventions and discourses too.

However, analytical work in these spheres has tended to remain stubbornly segregated. Though analyses of humanitarianism and development share many key concerns (see Introduction), their literatures run in parallel, and seldom engage one another. At the same time, while the literatures on humanitarianism and development each draw together the state, non-governmental and super-governmental actors, in each the family is virtually absent. Thus, for example, while much has been said about the depoliticising dynamics of both development and humanitarian intervention – the “anti-politics machine”, in James Ferguson’s (1994) memorable phrasing – comparatively little has been said about the work to which families and kinship are put in that depoliticizing process. And yet, as is evident in both the Permanent Secretary’s speech and the choir’s performance above, many intervening agencies turn first to the discourse of family when seeking to downplay and obscure fundamentally political or economic aims. The family provides a powerful institutional metaphor that government, NGOs, and donors can – and do – tap into as a means of naturalising their work, relationships, and power. But – as I will show in this chapter – it is also more than a metaphor, and features in the daily practice and lived experience of these purportedly ‘official’ spaces, as well as in their depoliticising effects. To overlook the role of kinship in development and

humanitarianism is, in other words, as analytically blinding as overlooking the role of development and humanitarianism in kinship.

This analytical fragmentation recalls the problematic legacy of ‘domaining’ identified by McKinnon and Cannell (2013; see also Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). Not only have the social sciences tended to differentiate spheres of analytical concern from one another somewhat arbitrarily and artificially, they argue, these differentiations continue to assume the separation of the political (and economic) from the domestic, and infer from this separation the relative inconsequence of the family. In this chapter, I aim to disrupt this domaining habit by framing NGOs and the state through the lens of kinship. In drawing together the realms of kinship and the political in this way, I do not seek a return to understandings of African societies as ‘small-scale’ or ‘pre-modern’; nor do I aspire to the corollary notions of African politics as fundamentally kin-based. Rather, I suggest that we might reconceptualise *all* public, political institutions and work – including those we are accustomed to exceptionalising as ‘Western’ and ‘modern’ – as being fundamentally informed by kinship ideals and practices, and in constant negotiation with both. Anthropologists have long become accustomed to thinking of kinship in terms of power; but we have less facility in doing the reverse, that is in thinking of power – or politics – in terms of kinship. Here, I make a gesture in that direction.

I begin this chapter by exploring the daily lived experience of a government social work (S&CD) office, and an NGO orphan care programme, from the perspective of Tswana kinship. I suggest that two parallel projects emerge: one, of domesticating the workplace (compare Carsten 2013); and the other, of managerialising, bureaucratising or professionalising the family and household (compare Lambek 2013). Both projects, I argue, have partial success at best, a limitation evident in the ways *dikgang* figure therein. Echoing the strategy used in Chapter Five, I then return to the opening ceremony with which the chapter began, to look at the ways in which relationships within and among NGOs, government, and international donors are publicly performed and delimited. By so doing, I investigate the possibility of

extending Chapter Five's conclusions about the relationship of family to village on national and transnational scales. I argue that the ceremony simultaneously enacts *multiple* notions of kinship, suggesting that these multiple notions were at work and being contested in the spaces of the NGO and social work office as well. This multiplicity, in turn, exacerbates what Michael Lambek has called the "superfluity and...excess" (Lambek 2013: 255) of kinship – which tends to overwhelm, outstrip and evade the constraints imposed by both workplaces and bureaucratic systems. With this multiplicity in mind, I ask whether kinship is simply "encapsulated in and by the state" (Lambek 2013: 257) and other transnational political agencies, as we often assume; or whether it may encapsulate or encompass these agencies in turn.

Stuck in the Office: Social Work

"Do you have the death certificate?" Goitse asked the hunched, slightly bewildered looking man who sat across the desk from her, next to two teenagers in their school jumpers. He shook his head, saying he'd already given copies to his area social worker. "Birth certificates?" she pursued, nodding towards the students while picking up her mobile phone and dialling. These he provided to her, looking askance at her phone; she pulled out a file in which to record them. Her call having gone through, she began berating another social worker for his missing registration statistics. She handed the birth certificates back, and – still on the phone – told the client, "You'll have to come back with certified copies of those and the death certificate. I'll be in touch to call the children for therapy." He nodded, looking a little perplexed. "They're already registered for the food basket, don't worry," Goitse added, going back to her phone call. The man nodded and sighed, ushering the teenagers out.

I had just arrived at the District Council Social and Community Development (S&CD) office to meet with Goitse, who was the head of the area's orphan care programme (and therefore Tumelo's boss; see Chapters 1, 2, and 4). I had known and worked with Goitse for several years, and we had been working on a proposal to have me attached to her office to assist with the coordination of orphan care NGOs in

the district. Initially I had stayed outside, seated on one of the long, red padded benches that lined the hallway between offices, waiting for her to finish with her clients. The benches were crowded with people that day, many of whom looked as if they had been waiting for hours: men with their heads tipped back against the wall, women with their heads scarved and their arms crossed, grandmothers trying to contain the impatience of small children. Spotted by one of Goitse's colleagues, I had been encouraged to go straight in.

After she finished her call, I asked Goitse about the clients who had just left. She explained that the children had been registered as orphans recently, and had brought in their birth certificates in response to a government push to ensure that all orphaned and vulnerable children had their identity documents in order. "I don't know who that man was who came with them," she added, sounding a bit suspicious. "There were issues. I can see them." I asked what she meant. "Just, problems," she answered, evasively. "It can be anything. People these days lack parenting skills, they don't know how to care for children," she added.

Before I could pursue that thought, she flipped open a large, lined minute book and placed it between us. "These are the notes from our visit to the NGO the other day," she explained. "I tried to note everything. You know what, I don't know what's going on but I don't trust these people," she added. I asked why she was concerned. "Well, it's full of foreigners, you know. I tried to find out about all the programmes they're running but they didn't want to tell me about other things. How do we know if they have the right skills for what they are doing?" she asked. "If we call them for things, they don't want to come. Did I tell you that they tried to call *us* to a meeting, the other day?" she added, incredulous.

Before she could expand, another young man came in, holding a file. She seemed to know him, and invited him to sit down. He had dark bags under his eyes, and handed her a death certificate. She looked over the certificate, and asked him in Setswana about the illness it recorded. He began speaking about his grandmother, who had died the week previously, and the pain she had experienced in her legs – until he was

interrupted by a phone call. Goitse answered, and conducted a lengthy conversation about the availability of a government house she was to move into that week while her client waited. I tried to occupy myself with reading the NGO notes. Having put down the phone, Goitse noted that the death certificate listed cardiac congestion and asked the young man whether he understood that. He shook his head, and said it just seemed that she had given up and died. The phone rang again. The man sat patiently. Another social worker came in with application forms for school uniforms that needed signing off. Goitse – on the phone still – refused, saying there was no money left; the social worker pleaded with her, calling his clients *bongwanake*, my children, and insisting they wouldn't be able to go to school without the uniforms. Goitse signed the forms, protesting. As he left, the social worker asked Goitse to loan him two hundred Pula (roughly £20) to pay his water bills; this request she refused flatly, but only, she reassured him, because she had not yet paid her own.

Only once the social worker had left did Goitse turn her attention back to the young man, noting the number of the death certificate in a spreadsheet. "They did something when they were taking those mourning clothes from her," the young man added obscurely, looking troubled. Goitse did not register the comment, much less ask whom he meant by 'they'. She handed him back the death certificate, and thanked him, and then got up promptly. "I'm coming," she noted to me, and then went. I didn't see her again until I had to go home for the day.

The office was always hectic. There were five of us assigned to it, though it was clearly meant for one. We squeezed between shelving, filing cabinets and computers, ranged along both sides of a broad L-shaped desk that bisected the room, occasionally shuffling over to make room for clients. We were seldom all there at once, of course, except perhaps first thing in the morning. More often it was two, maybe three of us, with others' coats, handbags or mobile phones left on or under the desk to signify their presence while they were off seeing to administrative responsibilities – or when they were away at one of the frequent meetings, trainings, workshops, or conferences to which they were called and sent by a bewildering array of bosses and supervisors. Almost as frequently, they would be out paying their

utility bills or the monthly interest on lay-bye purchases, buying snacks at the nearby shops, picking up things for their children, or making visits to colleagues (though these were trips we often all made together, over early and extended lunch breaks). The door was kept closed, but the traffic in and out was constant: people looking for forms, calling people to meetings, dropping off statistics, being sent for fresh *diphaphata* (bread), or just popping their heads in to say hello, ask favours, or borrow sugar and tea (we kept a small stash, for which we contributed jointly). At the same time, there were clients bringing letters and documentation, dropping off forms, and discussing sensitive issues of property grabbing, the illness and death of parents, or the welfare of their children. Meanwhile, the social workers whose office it was held meetings for their *metshelo* savings groups there (see Chapter Two) – which often included other officemates; conducted conversations with creditors and debtors, their landlords, or their children’s schools; called friends and partners, or even pastors for guidance in dealing with difficult issues in their relationships (which once led to tears). And they did all of these things freely, in front of me and one another, and occasionally in front of clients as well. The office was a curiously private, public space; or a curiously public, private space – in many ways like the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, at home. In any case, it was a space in which lots of things were always happening, but it was impossible to get anything done.

The Department of Social and Community Development (S&CD) had a vast range of responsibilities. Each village office – like the one in which we met Tumelo, in Chapter Four – had perhaps one or two social workers, but hundreds of clients, sometimes spread across several villages. Clients ranged from destitute families and orphaned children to the HIV-positive and World War II veterans. The social workers were responsible for assessing and registering clients; administering food baskets, provided to clients’ families via local shops; school fees, schooling placements, school uniforms and transport for the children; the provision of adequate shelter and clothing; and, nominally at least, psychosocial support and counselling. They were mandated to undertake direct intervention in families, and to remove children in cases of neglect, abuse, or violent conflict; and, as we saw in Chapter

Four, they were responsible for arranging fostering or institutional care, and the subsequent rebuilding of the family as well. While these duties already represented an overstuffed portfolio, social workers were also responsible for the oversight of Village Development Committees and other local development initiatives, as well as the organisation of most major commemorative events. District-level offices, like Goitse's, not only coordinated village offices, but oversaw their budgets, reporting, and training, and linked them both with District Councils and, at national level, the Department of Social Services. They also handled cases directly, or on referral.

At both levels, social workers were swamped. Their powers were sweeping, and grounded in recognition of their professional training and expertise; and certainly the potential scope of their access to the family was unparalleled by any other 'super-familial' actor. But they frequently complained of being stuck in the office, bound to the administrative imperatives of their work, and unable to practice what they saw as their core responsibilities – namely, the psychosocial support of their clients. As we've seen briefly above, the policy environment in which they worked prioritised the filling of forms and registers, the collection and assessment of certificates, the maintaining of detailed case files, the processing of statistics and wrangling over money for the basic goods to which clients were entitled. It was work, in other words, more concerned with the bureaucratisation of clients and their families than anything else. It sought to situate clients in a network of documents, and to trace and define their familial relationships in the same way; and it tied access to a vast range of material support to this bureaucratic recognisability. While social workers did not share these policy priorities, they were nonetheless key to the social workers' greatest professional capacity to provide care – which, as we have seen, Botswana locate in the provision of material goods, and the work of acquiring and looking after them (see Chapter Two).

At the same time, Goitse's reflections on her clients evinced a common professionalising discourse, used both to describe the extent of breakdown in the Tswana family and to justify intervention. Many social workers I knew complained of a "lack of parenting skills" – always in English – among their clients' families.

Alternatively, they spoke of parents misunderstanding children's developmental and emotional needs, or having a poor grasp of basic psychology, all of which rendered them less capable of providing love and care – especially if the children were not 'theirs'. Many social workers ran training courses on these and other 'life skills'. But perhaps most importantly, this professionalising project demonstrated an attitude towards what constitutes and creates *dikgang* that was rather at odds with the understanding of *dikgang* we have seen in this thesis. In the exchanges narrated above, for example, Goitse does not register her client's suspicions about his dead grandmother's mourning clothes – which to other listeners may have indicated risk of witchcraft. As well as they understand it in personal terms from their own families, social workers make little room for witchcraft as a legitimate risk to be addressed in a professional context. Similarly, problems are traced to latent psychological or emotional stress caused by an inability to express grief, trauma, or other feelings – although, as has been amply established elsewhere, Batswana generally consider the expression of pain and other negative emotions to be *more* dangerous than its containment (Dahl 2009a: Chapter Six; Durham 2002a; Durham and Klaits 2002; Klaits 2010: Chapter Five). Social workers focus on the clear identification, expression, and resolution of issues that arise – a focus that echoes the bureaucratic work of recognition and authorisation for which they are responsible, but that stands in stark contrast to the careful containment of recognition and expression, and the emphasis on *irresolution*, that we have seen families bring to *dikgang* elsewhere in this thesis.

As Michael Lambek (2013) notes, the “shift to new forms of authorization or recognition is the biggest transformation of kinship to take place under modernity” (2013: 250), and it is a shift that has become even more marked in Botswana's time of AIDS. Bureaucratic and professional ways of recognising, like the kin-forming recognition we explored in Chapter Three, might well – as Lambek suggests – be acts of kinship (2013: 249-50). And yet, in ways reminiscent of the foster placement described in Chapter Four, a certain myopia is evident. Goitse did not recognise the man who brought the first two clients I found in her office; she recognised the second, but did not recognise the concern he registered about the behaviour of

relatives at his grandmother's funeral. Much like Tumelo, who spoke of reading between the lines to see family conflict, Goitse could 'see' potential issues, but not always the networks of kin in which they were emplaced. The social work perspective, in other words, is oriented towards recognising problems – that is, *dikgang* – but not the relationships in and through which they exist. Taken together, the inevitable partiality of bureaucratic attempts to pin down kinship, the misrecognition of *dikgang* produced by professional discourse, and the social worker's stuckness in the office, perpetuate that myopia. In this sense, I suggest that while negotiating bureaucratic recognition may be an act of kinship, it is an act of kinship between those who negotiate it (the two men above, or the parents and grandparents waiting outside the office) and those for whom it is negotiated (the teenagers, the children outside, and any other potential clients), rather than between those people and the state. The family, in other words, may accede to bureaucratisation and professionalisation, and in this sense their acts of kinship may also be acts of state-making; but at the same time, their relationships evade and remain obscure to the state (Lambek 2013: 250-51, 255-56).

Of course, as the office slice-of-life presented above suggests, social workers do not simply conform to their 'stuckness' in the office, or the trappings of their bureaucratic tasks. They challenge both, and I suggest the challenges they make are primarily gestures of domestication. I see domestication working in two ways in Goitse's office. First, Goitse and her colleagues chose to use their shared workspace, undertake their work, and relate to one another in ways distinctly reminiscent of life in the *lelwapa* (courtyard). Thus, for all they were expected to stay put in the office, they were in constant movement (Chapter One) – visiting, checking in on people, even moving around the district to pop in on local-area colleagues. We all contributed for certain food staples, went out to get our lunches together, and generally ate together (Chapter Two). As most of the women were either married or had children, conversation gravitated around their home lives; and they conducted frank conversations with spouses and children over the phone in front of everyone – though the younger, unmarried women were careful to stick to text messages or receive their calls outside the office, as would be expected of them at home (Chapter

Three). The youngest were sent to buy bread or fetch things, and in their absence others from down the hall would be called to do so (Chapter One, 4). The feeling created was thoroughly home-like. And the social workers drew clients into this dynamic as a matter of course, continuing to undertake their home-work in the clients' presence. Social workers often spoke of child clients as *bongwanake*, my children; my supervisor at Social Services frequently referred to himself as the uncle of Botswana's orphans. And in these ways, they naturalised both the bureaucratising project for which they were responsible, and the significant powers they held over families as well. Of course, clients were often bewildered by this treatment, and seldom engaged in it reciprocally; rather, they behaved like guests in someone's yard, surrounded by the business of family but careful to exclude themselves from it – thereby evading those naturalising dynamics, much as they evaded the bureaucratisation of their relationships above.

Secondly, Goitse and her colleagues prioritised their responsibilities for and duties to their own families over their professional duties while in the office. Goitse's phone calls above were partly work-related, but largely related to securing housing for herself and her family, or arranging for problems to be fixed at home. I visited the office several times, and each time I would be invited to accompany the others as they went to pay their bills, to negotiate with Water Affairs over a broken pipe, to buy their children clothing, or to pick up groceries – all of which errands were undertaken in the middle of the day, and usually took hours. I was often hesitant, and asked whether we shouldn't be in the office; but I was scoffed at, and reminded that these errands could only be run during office hours, and obviously took priority. The frank, often personal phone negotiations with spouses and partners, the berating of children, or the consulting with pastors all took similar priority over any other work being conducted in the office. And this prioritisation served to turn the office into a primarily home-oriented space. Both sets of domesticating practice, I suggest, served to naturalise the bureaucratising project for which the social workers were responsible, and to subvert it – suggesting yet another way in which kinship evades and stymies institutionalised attempts to contain or instrumentalise it.

At the same time, there were critical differences between these practices and their parallels at home – and the most notable of these, I argue, relate to *dikgang*. Though we all undertook kin-like practices of movement, contribution, recognition-management, and so on in the office, these seldom – if ever – generated *dikgang*. Much as was the case with the *metshelo* (savings groups) we saw in Chapter Two, issues or misunderstandings that arose were simply left. Problems were not reported, people were not called together to discuss them, and no-one was drawn into mediating positions. Conflict, on the whole, was avoided. In contrast, the way my office-mates brought their home lives into the office frequently involved *dikgang* and the mediation thereof – many of the phone calls described above involved the reporting and discussion of issues arising at home, whether around partners or children or parents; the advice sought from the pastor was advice about managing intimate relationships; and so on. And yet my colleagues were careful not to draw one another into these dynamics of *dikgang*. They commiserated or shared examples of similar situations in their own lives, but they seldom offered or asked for advice, and they never became involved. While they brought the home into the office (often in ways that profoundly disrupted their work), these social workers nevertheless marked it off as a separate sphere from the workplace; and they made this distinction clearest in their management of *dikgang*.

As Goitse's suspicions about the local NGO imply, the working conditions, aims and programmes of the NGO world diverge sharply from those of the social work office. And yet, I suggest, similar projects – of managerialising the family, on the one hand, and of domesticating the workplace, on the other – are at work. And they are similarly marked by frustration, evident in part by tracing the ways in which they (mis)recognise and cope with *dikgang*. I turn next to a visit I made to our local NGO, to interrogate this possibility.

Home Visits: Non-Governmental Organisations

Tsholo filled me in as we bumped our way along a meandering red dirt road to the outskirts of the village in the organisation's spacious, logo-plastered combi. "The girl's parents died," she began. "So she left their home village and came here looking for work, maybe as a maid for somebody. At first it was fine, she was living with a family, cooking for them, caring for the children. They didn't pay her much but she had a place to stay, and food. But then her sister came looking for her. After some time the family felt it was too much and kicked them out. When we found them they were just staying under a tree, now with the brother who had also come."

The yard to which we were making our way was the last stop in what was clearly the NGO's grand tour. It had begun at the centre, with its impressive, custom-built kitchen, hall, and office block; and it had featured not only an introduction to the children but a somewhat contrived opportunity to participate in some large-group singing and playing with them. I greeted and tried to joke with the centre staff in Setswana, mainly cooks and administrators; they were polite, but made efforts to fade into the background as we passed through. A few foreign volunteers we encountered were a little more responsive to my forthright greetings, but they gave me the distinct and familiar sense of being sized up. The project had been conceived and founded by a European, was heavily funded by European development agencies and supported by many resident expats from Europe, Britain and America. But on a day-to-day basis, Tsholo and her husband – both from the village themselves – ran the show. The tour took in computers, classrooms, and a garden; and it emphasised the ways in which children were being helped with their schooling and life skills, shown opportunity for developing their talents, as well as being fed and given an opportunity to "just be children". I was told of the success of choirs and drama groups formed by the NGO, which were a source of particular pride. Throughout, Tsholo spoke about the centre's clientele as "our children". I was shown to a café and shop a short drive away, soon to be opened by a group of parents – "our children's parents" – as an income-generation venture. Having known the organisation since its inception, I was struck by the rapidity of its growth and the

reach it had achieved; but the model, and even the tour, was familiar to me from dozens of other NGOs I had visited. Indeed, I had led similar tours myself. Whether because she acknowledged that shared experience, or whether it was part of the tour, Tsholo was fairly frank about the family we visited last.

“The social workers had heard about them but weren’t doing much,” she continued. The NGO fell under the auspices of Goitse’s office, and NGO staff reciprocated the suspicion and distrust Goitse had for them – the two agencies held the majority of their orphaned clients in common, and sometimes worked together on cases, though on the whole they shared very little information. “S&CD found the small ones a place at school, but you know they were hardly eating, only the meal they got at the centre,” Tsholo continued. “The social workers were looking for a plot for them but not managing. We worked together with them on that one, going to Land Board. Then they found this plot, but *hei!* So far out of the village, how are the children supposed to get to school? Then they couldn’t find transport for them, so for a long time we were coming here to pick them to school ourselves.”

By now we were already at the outskirts of the village. There were broad stretches of dusty scrub between the few cleared yards. Where people had built, their houses were clearly newer: many were still unpainted, or unplastered, and some had only reached window level on the yard’s first structure. Children stopped their play to watch our passage.

“At least we managed to find some money for building. S&CD managed with some, and then there was this volunteer with us who did a lot of fundraising, I think she was Canadian, she raised money from her family and friends, she even brought some to see. But when the house was finished! *Owai...* Relatives started pitching up from everywhere,” Tsholo continued. I admitted I had been wondering about them; previously unmentioned or unknown family members had a habit of gradually overpopulating such tales. I asked whether anyone had tried to find extended family in the girls’ home village before the building had begun. Tsholo shrugged. “We didn’t know anything about them. But as soon as the house was there...! *Ija!* This other

uncle came with the wife, they have two children; then the other cousin came; plus the three children that were here already. Now there are eight people in a little two-and-half, and lots of others coming and going. Nobody is working, you know, and the food basket from S&CD is not enough. We took the older girl back to school but now she's fallen pregnant, imagine...she is still *motsetse* (confined) in the house by now."

She gestured up ahead a little, where the house had come into view. It was a neat, peach-painted, two-and-a-half – named for the two bedrooms standing out on either side of a much smaller, recessed 'half' room, each with its own door leading in from a narrow stoop. The stoop had black iron burglar bars across its front, a security measure only reasonably well-employed people would ordinarily afford. The house sat in the back corner of the fenced, cleared yard, which had been swept smooth and featured a few tall trees at its edges, and a few decorative flowers in broken water scoops near the standpipe.

We turned into the gate, and one of several small children in the yard ran up to open it for us. We pulled through and wheeled in front of the house, Tsholo leaning over me to shout a greeting at the small group of women and children washing clothes under a tree in the back corner of the yard, opposite the house. "I don't know those ones," she commented, somewhat suspicious. She came to a halt in front of the stoop, where a plump young woman looked up from her sweeping and smiled at us shyly.

Unusually, we didn't get out of the combi at all. Tsholo explained to the young woman that we were just passing by, and then asked after the girl who had just given birth. The young woman chatted readily but somewhat apologetically, casting me uncertain smiles throughout – we had not been introduced, which made us both hesitant. The new mother was fine, and the baby was healthy. They were hoping she could go back to school in the next term. The younger siblings were at school. The young woman herself still hadn't found work. A half-dressed toddler came waddling out of one of the rooms on to the stoop, uncertainly; Tsholo called teasing,

affectionate greetings to him, and the young woman smiled broadly and encouraged him to greet us. Shortly thereafter we were headed out again, saying goodbye to everyone we had greeted on the way in. Their expressions were blank.

An impressive variety and number of NGO interventions target children and their families in Botswana. When I established a unit to coordinate them at Social Services in 2005, a rapid assessment I ran uncovered no fewer than 220 orphan care projects (as most called themselves) nationwide. They ranged from preschools to therapy camps, from weekly ‘life skills’ and abstinence programmes to residential places of safety, from community mobilisation programmes to income-generation projects. Some involved one person handing out donations; others, a committee of local volunteers conducting events, or a group of professionals creating training curricula. But by far the majority – the sought-after ideal, and often the best-funded – operated on the drop-in centre model, like Tsholo’s. These might run all-day preschools, but they were predominantly set up for after-school care, and usually welcomed orphaned children and youth of school-going age for several hours every afternoon.

An analysis of the vast range of non-governmental interventions in Botswana could easily generate a thesis on its own; and indeed, centres like the one described above have been the subject of previous thoroughgoing research (see Dahl 2009a). I do not propose to repeat that analysis here. Instead, I seek to draw out the parallel, contradictory projects described at the outset of this chapter: the managerialisation of the family, on the one hand, and the domestication of the NGO, on the other.

As we saw in Chapter One, NGOs – like S&CD offices – also have registration processes, and their means of bureaucratising the family link closely to the social workers’. S&CD offices often refer client families to local NGOs, which may request similar documentation (birth certificates, death certificates, and so on), keep parallel registers, and maintain case files of their own. Families that approach NGOs first – as many do – are usually referred to S&CD in the same way. NGOs, then, play a key,

complementary role in securing and extending the government's bureaucratisation project.

At the same time, NGO staff and volunteers tend not to be stuck in the centre to the extent that social workers are stuck in the office, and they often take a much more hands-on approach to their work. Still, even this hands-on work tends to link to the bureaucratisation project described above. Tsholo's narration of the NGO's work with the girl they found living under a tree focuses primarily on navigating governmental systems: bringing her to the attention of the social workers, helping them advocate to the Land Board, working with them to access funds for building a house, and so on. In this sense, I suggest, NGO work is often primarily managerial; it seeks to steer clients (and by extension their families) through government bureaucratic systems, to advocate for, advise and direct them. The NGO's other main work lies in temporarily filling the gaps in that project: feeding the children until they receive their food basket, driving them to school until transport is supplied, and supplementing the building fund with the help of international donors. NGOs play a critical role in making the government bureaucratisation project work in practice, in regularising its access to clients, and in coordinating the range of institutions and people involved.

That said, much of the work NGOs do is not with families at all, but exclusively with clients, at least to begin with (see Chapter One and Two). And this focus strongly influences NGO styles of domesticating the workplace, which diverge somewhat from social work styles. Of course, many of the same practices of domesticating the office as those we saw with the social workers above are also at work in NGOs: staff and volunteers are frequently on the move, call and send junior staff and children on errands, make visits, eat together, contribute various forms of care-things and care-work (whether through fundraising, or cooking, or joint upkeep of the centre), form *metshelo* savings groups together, and so on. And they draw their clients into all of these processes to an even greater extent than social workers do, given that they are usually together for several hours every day. NGO staff also bring their home lives into the workplace in similar ways: phone call interventions, errands for home being

run in tandem with errands for work, and occasionally the gathering of excess donations for kin at home all feature. Indeed, as in Tsholo's case above, many NGOs are managed by couples; frequently their children are in attendance, and extended kin are tapped to help with the day-to-day running of the project, making the presence of the family even more dominant in NGO workplaces than elsewhere.

The fact that many orphan care projects are run as 'family businesses', as one friend put it, speaks to the other major way in which they are domesticated: they are often conceptualised as independent *gae*, or homes, into which the clients could be drawn. Many NGO coordinators I knew insisted on being identified by parental epithets at work, and were called *mmago* or *rrago*, mother-of or father-of. Granted, they would have been called by these teknonyms elsewhere in the community; but to use them in a work environment underscored the familial terms in which they imagined their projects. These appellations were attached exclusively to the names of the coordinators' own children, but the coordinators themselves generally encouraged other children at the centre to take them as parents or family; and as we saw above, they used the possessive "my" or "our" for the children, reciprocally.

Beyond naming, the spatialities of the centre are strongly reminiscent of the *gae* as well. The centre bears strong symbolic resonance with the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, bracketed by offices and activity centres rather than bedrooms; indeed, some centres had paved a *lelwapa* of their own. Tsholo's tour took us to affiliated income-generation projects and building sites that bore a geographical relationship to the centre that echoed the relationships between lands, cattlepost, and *lelwapa*, as well. And all, notably, were sites where NGO staff and clients might be based (or 'stay'), among which they would frequently need to be called and sent, and where they might be seen to be doing care-work (of cooking, for example, gardening, building or looking after children) – as would be expected of the places that comprise the *gae*. Unlike the careful boundaries established in kin practice, however, NGOs like Tsholo's work to absorb as many clients as thoroughly as possible, to the extent of drawing in their extended kin if necessary (disruptive though the NGO considers them to be). Thus, Tsholo's NGO had built a bakery explicitly to employ 'her

children's' parents; and they sought to incorporate the children who had come to live with the young woman they had housed, at least. At the same time, clients' family homes become marginal, offshoots of the centre's *lelwapa* among which the centre-family might move, and at which they might stay, but ultimately secondary to the centre itself. Familiar though they are, then, the geographies of the *gae* are refigured, reoriented around the child, and put to the task of extension and absorption rather than delimitation. And in the NGO's effective deployments of kin terms, practice, and symbolic resonances, this refiguration is effectively naturalised.

And yet – as in the social work office above – these projects of managerialising the family and domesticating the NGO are only partially successful. Again, attention to *dikgang* suggests some of the ways in which they fall short. Even on Tsholo's brief grand tour, it became clear that what the NGO identified as problems were markedly out of sync with what we have seen to constitute *dikgang* in the rest of this thesis. This mis-recognition was first evident in the NGO's assessment of the girl they found under the tree as family-less, and extended through the provision of well-meant material resources and opportunities. The inherent risks that are likely to accrue to the girl – who now owns a fully-finished house while still at school, for which she owes virtually no obligation – in terms of jealousy, or the management of claims made by extended family members that she may be understood to have scorned, go unanticipated. The latter risk in particular had already ripened into a silent tension between Tsholo and the extended family, marked by their evident mutual suspicion and the awkwardness with which we were received in the yard.

Such mismatches in NGO and kin understandings of *dikgang* are abundant. In NGOs, for example, intimacy and the dangers it presents around balancing closeness and distance (see Chapter One), are avoided. As Bianca Dahl notes in her study of an orphan care NGO, staff will go to great lengths to avoid physical contact with clients that they feel is appropriate only among kin (Dahl 2009a). Like social work offices, NGOs suffer a certain myopia with regard to kin networks: they may see a child under a tree but do not see the family relationships in which she is situated until they reveal themselves. Though Tsholo's suspicion of these appearing kin suggests she

saw them as a problem, she had no language or means by which to engage the issue they presented. Similarly, if extended kin are drawn in to help with the NGO's work, it is often in the same way as children are sent to 'far relatives' (Chapter Four): they are frequently only hired for short-term 'piece work', and are often distantly enough related that should problems arise, they are simply let go. Perhaps most importantly, 'contributions' are drawn from outside, where they are formulated explicitly as non-reciprocable gifts; and NGO staff cannot transform them into gestures of care, any better than families receiving food baskets can (see Chapter Two). As with the social work office above, then, for all that the NGO is modelled upon and attempts to draw in the home, it also sharply distinguishes and segregates itself from family, thereby disrupting its own naturalisation efforts. At the same time – again, like the social work office – the families it seeks to absorb escape and overwhelm it, frustrating its efforts further.

In spite of the differences in their approaches, then, the parallel projects run by S&CD offices and NGOs – of bureaucratizing the family, on the one hand, and of domesticating the workplace, on the other – both seem to encounter the same difficulties. Both projects offer the promise of naturalising the work and roles of these agencies, while containing the problematic disorder and breakdown of the Tswana family; but client families thoroughly evade them, and the agencies' disjunctive attitudes towards *dikgang* undermine such naturalising effects as their efforts might have had. To further unpack these dynamics, I return to the opening ceremony with which the chapter began. Taking the example of the events explored in Chapter Five, I use this event to interrogate what sorts of relationships are performed, what those relationships might tell us about the influences at work in the disruptions we have described above, and what can be deduced about the links between kinship and politics therefrom.

An Opening Ceremony, Revisited

The choir finished their rousing performance, weaving their way off the sandy stage and singing until they broke formation and dispersed among the audience. From the podium, the master of ceremonies thanked them with great enthusiasm, and warmly welcomed the lead teacher of the Canadian school group to speak next.

The lead teacher was a contentious figure, having offended many government and NGO representatives alike over the course of the week with his brash, demanding manner. The previous day he had insisted on separating food and water for his students from the water supplied for everyone else, suspecting theft; senior government figures watched with a mix of dismay and bemused resignation as he first berated the NGO director, and then instructed his students to relocate dozens of water bottles from the kitchen into their tents. Now at the podium in his custom-tailored German-print T-shirt and a baseball cap, he consulted with the translator to ensure that he would be translated phrase by phrase. After speaking of what the retreat campsite – which he framed as a ‘humanitarian project’ – represented for bonds between Botswana and Canada, the teacher thanked the host NGO and government departments and ministries in a perfunctory, non-differentiating fashion. He added offhandedly, “We consider everyone here to be like surrogate parents for us.” The translator followed with, “*Re le tsa jaaka batsadi ba rona tota tota*,”– we take you like our real, real parents.

He then called all twenty-nine of his students in front of the podium – though it meant their backs were to the dignitaries and most of the community, and they faced only the VIPs under the tent – and presented them as the best Canada had to offer. They were a visibly mixed group, as the lineup was meant to emphasise: of largely South Asian, South-east Asian, Chinese, and mixed European descent. He intoned: “A country without its culture is lost.” It was a common enough sentiment for Botswana, an accidentally apt echo of the language deployed in revived initiation ceremonies about ‘picking up culture’ and thereby curing social ills (see Chapter Five). Attached to such a diverse group of children, however, from a place no-one

knew much about – but which presumably had greater prosperity and fewer social ills to cure – it caused visible confusion. The teacher elaborated a vision of what defined Canada as a nation: multiculturalism, a history of peacekeeping instead of war, the assurance of equality for all. “We teach our children to celebrate other cultures and values,” he explained, describing his students as the future leaders of Canada, and adding: “They are an example of what youth should be throughout the world...committed to making change.” The students tried to look grave and inspiring. Behind them, many in the crowd looked politely baffled. On the one hand, it seemed, the audience was being encouraged to preserve their culture; on the other, they were being encouraged to adopt a rather inscrutable but ostensibly successful Canadian model. On the one hand, these children had respected and taken their hosts as parents; on the other, they seemed to suggest that parents were incidental or unnecessary to the exemplary individuals these children had already become. I thought back to the teacher’s comment to his students late the night before, which I had overheard from across the campsite: “I’ll be honest with you, I don’t really care about Botswana or Botswanans or whatever. The important thing here is you guys, and the experience you’re getting.”

The Canadian teacher stepped down from the podium, leaving it to the last and most highly-ranked speaker – the Assistant Minister of Local Government, a ministry that oversaw everything from Social Services to District Councils and village *kgotla* administrations. He made his way out from under the VIP tent. Dressed in sharp khaki trousers and a multi-pocketed photographer’s vest, and flashing a good-humoured smile, he looked as if he had just come from a particularly satisfying safari. He waved away the translator jovially and settled in at the podium, beginning with an unexpected injunction: “I would like to invite you all to rise, and observe a moment of silence for those orphans we have lost to HIV and to abuse.”

His sombre invitation – in English – caught us all a little off-guard, though we rose and bowed our heads dutifully. Indeed, for all my years of attending such ceremonies and events, I had never heard such a discursive combination of catastrophes. Holding orphans up for pity over the loss of their parents and the assumed neglect of their

overburdened families, and rallying cries to rescue them and the future of the nation, constituted the usual rhetoric. But in the context of successful programmes in the free provision of antiretroviral medication (ARVs) and the prevention of mother to child transmission, orphanhood was seldom posed as a cause of HIV infection, and links between orphanhood and death were virtually never made. While abuse was connected with orphanhood frequently enough, and had become a major focus of social services discourse, I'd never heard it connected to death, either. The request for silence was unsettling in the complexity of social ills it subsumed; and more than that, it was jarring in its dislocation from the reality to which most of us in the audience were accustomed, in what felt like a dramatic inflation of the stakes of orphanhood in particular.

The Assistant Minister continued a while in English, congratulating the Canadian students (and their parents) for the spirit of love and giving they had shown, and calling upon all present to learn from their example. He did not bother to translate. Before long, however, he had shifted into Setswana – and had begun a different speech altogether. The exhortative thrust of this parallel speech was *kgokgontsho ya bana*, child abuse; and on this topic the Assistant Minister spoke at great length, with great conviction and passion. He confronted his audience: “Child abuse is there in our homes and families, though we are turning a blind eye to it and pretending it is not. Men! Uncles! Check yourselves! Check yourselves, look into your hearts.” It was the deliberate echo of a nationwide HIV/AIDS behaviour change campaign launched a few years previously, dubbed *Oicheke!* – Check yourself! (USAID 2010). “We appreciate these Canadian children for coming to look after our children,” he continued, still in Setswana; “but we have a responsibility to look after our children too, so that one day they might go to Canada to help children there, or even to any other place in the world.” He did not bother to translate this part of the speech either.

It was a spellbinding oration. And yet, the audience did not seem altogether impressed. The ranks of community members listened attentively but wore bland expressions. Children continued to run in and out, and choir members joked with one another on the sidelines. The Canadian contingent had begun to glaze over; most

looked bored, and a few looked frustrated, or perhaps offended. Just at the point where he had almost lost them, the Assistant Minister switched back into English – to describe his hope that one day, one of the Canadian students before him would meet a doctor on their travels, and find that he had grown up in Botswana; had attended a camp run in the very place they sat now; had come to grips with his loss and grief, had found hope, a sense of self and direction, and had made something of his life. The students lifted their heads, and some began to smile warmly. They were, of course, unable to decipher the strange double register that had emerged: in Setswana, families were abusive, irresponsible, corrupted, and broken; while in English, they were sources of love, giving, and hope for the future.

Shortly after the speeches were finished, the cooks and several volunteers from the village nearby called the Canadian students to help serve up the enormous meal that had been prepared – a gesture of inclusion that befitted children and young people at such a gathering. Their lead teacher was outraged, refusing his meal in protest, and insisting they all sit and allow themselves to be served like the VIPs – as he felt befitted respected guests. Everyone dispersed soon afterwards, the community members walking up the dusty road back to their homes and the government officials heading off in convoys of white four-by-four trucks. I learned later that the event, and the Canadians' week-long visit, had in fact cost the host NGO in Botswana more than three times as much as the students had fundraised – running into hundreds of thousands of Pula (or tens of thousands of pounds). It cost Social Services as much again, in officers' hours, petrol, food, and so on; and both Foreign Affairs and the District Council would have had similar bills. I was shocked, but my friends at Social Services and the NGO shrugged it off. "If someone was giving me only five pula I would still do everything to appreciate them," one insisted.

The speeches recounted above, linked to the speech given at the outset of the chapter, provide an initial sense of how discursively entangled the family is with the state, development, humanitarianism, and international relations. Community, national, and international relations are all – often awkwardly – cast in the idiom of family,

with a special emphasis on parents and children. International diplomacy is framed as a familial fostering of ambassadors; humanitarian work is cast in terms of love, care, and the inheritance of future generations. The NGO takes as its explicit mission the creation of kin for and among orphans, implicitly replacing lost parents. The Canadian students are thanked in part through their parents; acknowledge their hosts as parents; and are appreciated for helping raise Batswana children – a network of relatedness within and against which they then define their culture and nationhood. As Elana Shever (2013) notes of national sentiments – to which we might easily add humanitarian, development, and NGO sentiments more broadly – they “rest on a trope of familial bonds as the authentic basis for solidarity, care, obligation, and sacrifice” (2013: 88); and this trope works to refigure an otherwise distinctly odd combination of characters in Botswana’s backwoods, loosely and temporarily bound by circumstance and charity, as natural, unified and enduring.

At the same time, these discursive formulations work to separate the event’s participants, and establish the terms on which they can relate. And the sharpest separation made is between the NGO, government Ministries, and Canadian students on the one hand, and the families in attendance, on the other. The Assistant Minister, for example, cast aspersions on his entire Setswana-speaking audience, upbraiding them all for their inability to look after their own children as well as the Canadian students – themselves children – could. Those families (especially their men, their uncles) were thereby infantilised, cast beneath the elderhood first of the juvenile Canadian contingent, and secondarily of the government and NGO agencies that recruited their assistance. The Canadian teacher’s speech, while accepting the group’s Batswana hosts as parents, underlined this sentiment by emphasising the students’ superior agency in addressing issues that afflicted the community. At the same time, both the Assistant Minister and Deputy Permanent Secretary – when speaking in English – were careful to cast themselves and their agencies as the equals or elders of the Canadian group, whether thanking the students through their parents or positioning themselves as temporary parents in turn. And both deployed parallel professional discourses – one framed around international relations; the other in terms of social work assessments of societal dysfunction and visions of its remedy –

that reinforced this claim to equal consideration, by establishing a suitable distinction between the corrupted, suspect realm of the family and the advanced, modern realm of the state. This distinction echoed those made by the Canadian teacher – whose reference to family was peremptory, and quickly superseded by a lengthy rumination on the Canadian nation – establishing common ground among the speakers and their agencies from which the families in whose mould they had earlier cast themselves were explicitly excluded. All of the speakers, in other words, were engaged in the boundary-making work that McKinnon and Cannell (2013) suggest indicates the ideological nature of distinctions between politics and kinship.

These discursive deployments and re-positionings of kinship are typical of a social welfare, development and humanitarian genre, as well as being familiar ways of speaking about the state. To the extent that they organise means of relating, however, they are more than simply metaphorical. Indeed, a closer look at the unfolding of the event demonstrates uncanny parallels with kinship practice, as well as discourse – much as we saw in our examination of social work offices and NGO centres above. Echoes of the family feast in Chapter Five – itself reminiscent of wedding celebrations – are perhaps most obvious: the white tent, housing *bagolo* (elders) around which the event was oriented (here Ministers instead of parents); the ranging of celebrants around an open *lelwapa* or courtyard-like space; the speeches, introducing key figures in terms of their relatedness to one another; the collective contributions of money, goods, and work appropriate to a celebration, for entertainment, and for food sufficient to feed a village of guests. Like the family feast, the opening ceremony sought to perform the success of key figures, and the generative power of their relationships, while attempting to extend that success and remake those relationships in clear ways that distinguished them from the collected invitees. Echoes from other dimensions of kinship practice are evident, too: geographical scatteredness and the necessity of movement, gravitating to a shared space of care-work and contribution; the careful management of visibility, speech, and recognition; the anticipated circulation of children to the campsite for initiation-like therapy; and so on. Perhaps most significantly, *dikgang* are produced throughout: around imputations of stolen food and water, refusals to share, help serve

or eat, the public berating of NGO organisers or purportedly abusive families, and many more besides – all of which echo *dikgang* we've seen elsewhere in this thesis, and undermine the intended performance and extension of relational success in turn.

Where dynamics of *dikgang* have highlighted the failures of social workers and NGO staff to domesticate their own workplaces or relate to the families they serve, here they suggest a performance of relatedness among rather unusual actors: national government, local government, international donors and local NGOs. The Tswana family, meanwhile, is curiously marginalised, destabilised, even demonised. The campsite itself is as far as possible away from not only local families, but the families of children the NGO serves. Actual parents and children sit on the edges of the ceremony, moving in and out – but, unusually, have no real role to play in the proceedings (in contrast to the initiation homecoming in Chapter Five). The only mention made of them is either in terms of orphans having lost parents to disease, or in terms of the collapse and corruption of their relationships, beset by death, loss, abuse, and the constant threat of harm. And for all the appreciation afforded the Canadian students and NGO for their help, it is the Tswana family that bears the blame and responsibility for its own dissolution.

In discourse and practice alike, then, it seems that both the state and NGOs are involved in processes that we have seen to be characteristic of Tswana kinship – but in ways that are more about legitimising themselves as political entities, and their relationships with each other, than about an involvement in the Tswana family *per se*. That is to say, they are engaged in a process of state-making, or NGO-making, or perhaps the making of a shared public sphere, *through* family and kinship processes, without being engaged in kin-making as such. Their legitimacy is modelled on kinship, and is drawn from an apparent involvement in the day-to-day practice of kinship, but is geared towards building relationships with other 'super-familial' actors, at local, national, and transnational levels. And this disjunction is especially apparent in the different ways that *dikgang* are identified and addressed. As distinct as the spheres of government, development or humanitarian policy and practice may be (Mosse 2004b), then, they seem to be bound by an idiom and logic of kinship;

and, paradoxically, their deployment of that idiom and logic *separates* them from the sphere of the family, over which they attempt to assert authority but to which they enjoy little real access. That the kinship processes we have described should prove so pivotal on a macro scale is further indication of the fundamental importance of kinship practice in organisational and political practice – not simply at village level, but nationally and transnationally as well.

But what *is* the logic of kinship that seems to bind these actors? In the speeches above, as in the disjunctions evident between social work offices, NGOs, and families ‘on the ground’, a certain mutual misunderstanding seems to be at work. While the Canadian head teacher imagines his hosts as ‘surrogate parents’, for example, his translator understands them as real parents; and the links the teacher makes between individuals, culture, and nations against that backdrop visibly perplexes his audience. The Assistant Minister’s assessment of family breakdown, and his moment of silence for ‘lost orphans’, strikes a similarly confusing note. I suggest that this misunderstanding is the result of a proliferation and confusion of different models of kinship at work in the discourses above, and in the intervention practice we have already discussed. Specifically, the speeches above weave together, take apart, and move between what we might identify as Tswana and Canadian (or Euro-American more broadly) understandings of kinship – familiar enough to one another to be mutually recognisable, but disparate enough to be jarring.

For the sake of argument, I am reading the imagination or ideal of Canadian kinship here as a mix of English and American folk models, as described by David Schneider (1980) and Marilyn Strathern (1992). While there is no question that this imagination diverges sharply from the lived experience of Canadian kinship – particularly for a group of students who come from a range of predominantly Asian backgrounds – it is, I argue, the imaginative model that underpinned the students’ project and trip, and the one being presented by the lead teacher (himself of British extraction) above.

A strongly Euro-American notion of kinship emerges from the very beginning of the ceremony, in the quote that opened the chapter. The Deputy Permanent Secretary of

Foreign Affairs cast families as a background, contextual device for the production and reproduction of individuals and nations – much in keeping with English prioritisations of the individuality of persons (Strathern 1992: Chapter One). The Canadian lead teacher replicated this discursive technique, perfunctorily appreciating the group's Tswana hosts as 'parents', effacing the students' own families, and then presenting the youth as successful, agentive individuals, able not only to represent but to reproduce both their own nation and the nations of others. The Assistant Minister, too, in *both* his English and Setswana speeches, emphasises individuality as the key experience and aim of kinship. He individuates orphans, first of all, cutting them off from their families in a way that explicitly prioritises their relationships with their biological parents over any other relatives (1992: 12); casts uncles and others outside of the parent-child binary as the most insidious figures of the family; and individuates responsibility for abuse, while suggesting it will produce abusive individuals in turn. Indeed, having chosen to come halfway around the world to help others' children, and having enacted that commitment in a wild, isolated space – notably, in the absence of those children and their families – as an individual enterprise oriented mainly to their own growth, the Canadian students were bringing to life many of the fundamental imaginings around which English kinship is oriented (Strathern 1992: 12-13): choice, geographical isolation, wildness, and above all, individualism.

What I have briefly sampled as examples of the Canadian or Euro-American imagination of kinship is not, of course, entirely divorced from the Tswana notion thereof, and links emerge at several points. These connections give the impression that everyone is referencing the same, universal notion of kinship, while also producing the distinct jarring noted above. So, for example, though an emphasis on the parent-child relationship would have felt familiar and 'natural' to Canadians and Batswana alike – since Batswana re-cast a variety of relationships, including siblingship, in these terms (see Chapter Two), and since it's the critical nexus for biologised and emotional concepts of the Canadian family relationships as well (Schneider 1980) – the sense of mutual recognition it provides is quickly undermined by the stakes it represents. Thus, in Canadian – as in English – articulations of

kinship, the parent-child relationship most strongly evinces uniqueness and individualism (Strathern 1992: 12); whereas in Tswana articulations, it is taken to underline lasting responsibilities of care and mutual dependence (see Chapter Two). For the Canadian students, the parent-child relationship is fixed, given, and linked uniquely to birth (Schneider 1980); whereas for Batswana it is multiple, fluid, and linked to responsibilities of care, which may equally be applied to siblings (Chapter Two).

The same holds for references to love and care. Both Canadians and Batswana emphasise these qualities and use these words in English; both groups recognise them as key concepts in their understandings of kinship, and both assume that they share a common understanding of the terms. However, in Frederick Klaits' (2010) thorough description, the Tswana association of love with *lorato* involves "action and sentiment directed toward enhancing the well-being of other people" (2010: 3), or ways of speaking and acting that work in people's bodies (Durham 2002: 159). Care, associated with *tlhokomelo*, emphasises the provision of material goods and work (Klaits 2010: 4). Both of these terms have affective dimensions, but the focus is bodily, material, and work-oriented. The dominant tone of these terms for the Canadians, in contrast, is more likely emotional and private (Strathern 1992: 12) than embodied and enacted; and it is distinctly separated from work (Schneider 1980).

What becomes clear in these observations are fluid, almost invisible ways in which the Tswana speakers in particular shifted back and forth between Tswana and Euro-American understandings of kinship. This subtle shifting, I suggest, is indicative of the multiple ways in which Botswana's government policy, social workers and NGO staff alike *see* families; and of the extent to which these different visions grow out of fundamentally different ways of *being* family. The ways the social workers and NGO staff we shadowed above saw their clients showed strong elements of Tswana visions of kinship; but they also showed strong Euro-American influences. This influence is perhaps unsurprising: the Ministry of Local Government, under which the Department of Social and Community Development operates, was a holdover from the colonial era, and many of its acts and policies – including a particularly outdated

one on adoption (RoB 1951) – hearken back to that time. So, too, do the principles that underpin those frameworks. The curriculum for social work taught at the University was also of British origin, aligned with international standards of social work. Indeed, all of the social workers in the country were taught by the same dynamic, passionate professor, who identified as English-South African and whose understanding of children and families resonated strongly with the ideals analysed by Schneider and Strathern. And, of course, the work of social workers and NGO staff alike was framed by international conventions, policy frameworks and ‘best practice’, in particular those promulgated by the United Nations and by American development and aid agencies. While a detailed analysis of these conventions, policies and curricula is beyond the scope of this chapter, the work to which we have seen them put in this thesis is highly suggestive of their fundamental bent towards Euro-American folk ideals of kinship (compare Mayblin 2010 on international conventions around child labour). And the disjunctions evident in social work and NGO practice are equally suggestive of their influential, if obscured, presence.

Where kinship seems to provide a common basis of mutual understanding – a natural, shared ideal, a common emotional register, and a familiar set of practices – it instead provides a multiplicitous, muddled and contradictory field of experience. Taken together with its persistent and yet evasive presence in our visits to S&CD and the local NGO above, I suggest this positions kinship as *encompassing* of the political, institutional realm. Kinship encompasses the political not because it taps into a naturalised, universal process, but because it *doesn't* – though political perspectives on families expect it to do so. And this is especially evident in transnational contexts like the ceremony above. Where kinship is invoked to naturalise and stabilise institutionalised claims of power, its multiplicity instead makes them awkward and unnatural, and *destabilises* them. Kinship, then, does not simply evade or overwhelm bureaucratic attempts to contain it; it underpins those attempts, saturates their logic, and disrupts them from within, often rendering them ineffective. And it is in this sense that I suggest kinship – cast in its broadest terms – may be understood to encompass the political spheres of governments, NGOs, and

donor agencies alike. Not only is the village in the home, and the tribe, but a global array of political communities are as well.

Conclusion

At the opening ceremony above, the families of the *motse*, or village, ranged around the outside of the event, an undifferentiated mass of variously-engaged witnesses to the agencies' main act. The NGO, Ministries, and Canadian students seemed to take these families as context and backdrop: a potential challenge, an audience to whom exhortations might be made and for whom responsibility must be borne, perhaps, but an entity marginal to the performance itself. And yet, as we have seen above, it is these very families – and the shadow-audiences of Canadian parents behind them – against, through, and *within* which that performance was defined, and to which it was oriented. As we have seen, it is those very families, and their kin practices, against, through, and within which the everyday work of those same NGOs and Ministries is conducted. Just as we found the village defined against, through, and ultimately within the family in Chapter Five, here we find a transnational array of political agencies unexpectedly encompassed by kinship.

It is not simply that powerful national and transnational political, economic, religious, or other forces are exerting unidirectional influence on the Tswana family and creating upheaval, then – as Schapera (1940: 346-57) had it in the colonial era, and as development and humanitarian discourse has it now. And it is not simply that the Tswana family is exerting its own counter-influences. Rather, these spheres – or 'domains' (McKinnon and Cannell 2013), created in development and social sciences discourse alike – are intrinsically interlinked, in practice as much as idiom; each can only be meaningfully and fully understood in terms of the others. And attention to these interlinkages suggests that they are framed by a powerful understanding of relationships in predominantly kin terms – even if those notions of kinship are quite divergent.

McKinnon and Cannell (2013) suggest that the “kinship and marriage coordinates of Western liberal, supposedly secular, individualistic, democratic states” (2013: 25), otherwise “unmarked and invisible” (ibid.), are only made evident when those states suppress alternative kinship and marriage practices and the claims to sovereignty that go with them. I suggest that they also become evident in the transnational humanitarian and development programmes those states (and their civil society counterparts) fund or initiate – many of which explicitly or implicitly take the rehabilitation of families, and their transformation into a different kin ideal, as their aim. And these interventions draw out the ‘kinship coordinates’ of the states and communities in which they intervene in response. Humanitarian and development projects, then, become privileged sites for tracing patterns of influence, change and continuity between different kinship idioms and logics; and for investigating their political effects, at a macroscopic level.

Next, and finally, I conclude this thesis by drawing together the arguments made in the foregoing chapters: about the lived experience of Tswana kinship; the critical role conflict and crisis (or *dikgang*) plays in that experience; and the insights this framing of the Tswana family suggest for everything from the unfolding of the AIDS pandemic, to the effects of humanitarian intervention, and the relationships between kinship and politics on transnational levels. To do so, I return to the Legae household – at a moment of sudden misfortune.

Conclusion

‘We Have a Problem at Home’: The Ordinary Crisis of Kinship

Late one night, less than a year after I had left the field – and not long before Christmas – I had a sudden and unexpected text message from Moagi, the second-eldest brother at home.

“Hi dear, how are you? We have a problem at home, Kagiso is late, car accident.”

It knocked the breath out of me. I responded in urgent disbelief, asking what had happened, when, where. Moagi did not reply. I tried to reach other members of the family by text, but none of them replied either. Multiple phone calls either refused to connect or cut out after a few rings. Eventually, in a state of anxious dread, I got through on the family landline. Lorato answered as if she had been expecting me.

“Who told you?” she asked first. I explained I’d had a message from Moagi. She was audibly relieved. “We’ve been trying to figure out how to get hold of you. We were worried you would hear from someone else first.”

She told me what they knew of the afternoon’s disaster. Kagiso and his fiancée – for whose hand he had just concluded negotiations and paid *lobola* (bride price) – had been driving to the next town in Kagiso’s car. It was a drive Kagiso made every day for work, often multiple times. It was a drive I’d made hundreds of times myself. A truck overtaking at high speed hit them head-on. They were both killed instantly.

Everyone except Moagi was already home, and he was expected back from the town in which he worked the following day. Lorato described them sitting scattered around the darkened *lelwapa*, or courtyard, in silence, notifying friends and family by text message. “Nobody can sleep,” she said. We sat in silence on the phone a while ourselves. The last time we’d spoken, we’d been anticipating the second stage of Kagiso’s marriage – a church wedding – and wondering when it might be held, and how it should be organised. “I don’t need to hear anybody crying,” she warned,

adding, “It will be too painful.” I swallowed and tried to heed the warning; we had each heard the telltale catch in the other’s breathing. Steering ourselves back to safer ground, we started talking through everything that would need sorting out that week: the food to be bought, the programmes to be designed and printed, the tent to be hired, the firewood to be collected. “*Iya! Ke dikgang hela,*” I said, trying to lift the mood – there are only problems. Lorato chuckled knowingly. “But there’s going to be a serious issue of some sort, isn’t there?” I added more seriously, with a sudden sense of foreboding. The situation was so difficult already. “*Gareitse wena, re tla bona,*” Lorato answered, sighing – we don’t know, we’ll see. We stayed on the line, alternately chatting reflectively or sitting in silence, for hours – until the sun came up, and Mmapula called everyone to begin preparing the yard and house.

Kagiso and his fiancée died early in the week. Funerals were usually held on Saturday, but no-one was sure whether the arrangements could be made in time. Kagiso’s fiancée hailed from a village halfway across the country, and representatives sent by her family – parents, uncles, aunts – had to make their way to Dithaba before preparations could begin. They arrived on the Tuesday, and that night, the Legae family hosted a large meeting with their guests to begin the funeral consultations. Unfortunately, my foreboding had been justified: *dikgang* emerged almost immediately.

“They’re refusing to let us bury her,” Lorato explained by phone when I called for an update. “When we called them at first they said there would be no problem, we could bury her here with Kagiso. He paid *lobola*, right. But now we don’t know what happened, somebody must have changed, because now they’re refusing. Saying the marriage was not finished. They want to take her home.” The insistence was unexpected, and had thrown the meeting into disarray. Both families agreed to meet separately, and to reconvene the following day. “*Haish, wena, ke kgang e tona,*” Lorato commented, dispirited; it’s a big issue.

I called daily for updates thereafter, and received regular text messages from Moagi and my friend Lesego, who had arrived in Dithaba to help. The debate among the

Legaes – including Kagiso’s parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, and other elder members of the family – was protracted. Some were piqued that the woman’s family could even suggest taking their daughter home for burial when *lobola* had already been paid; lengthy exegeses of Tswana law were offered, and it was suggested that *lobola* should be claimed back. Others – including Mmapula, Kagiso’s mother – were deeply hurt, but could not summon the emotional will to fight, and thought it best to let the issue go. Alongside these questions of principle ran equally urgent questions of who would meet which of the funeral’s steep costs, who should take on which formal roles (for giving speeches, pall-bearing, and so on), how the programme should run, and how the extensive work of preparing for the event itself would be managed – all of which hung on the question of whether the woman’s family would contribute, or not.

The two families met together and disbanded again twice more over the next two days, holding separate meetings among themselves in between. The woman’s family seemed to be as divided and uncertain as the Legaes were. Some were insistent upon taking their daughter home for burial at all costs; others were quietly convinced that her place was with her husband, especially given that they had died together. The same concerns about cost, contribution and organisation hung over their deliberations as well. The woman had left behind a young son, who had become close to Kagiso but for whom Kagiso had not paid the requisite cattle to take as his own; the problem of who would take on his care presented yet another thorny decision, entangled with and impinging upon the others.

Muffled recriminations began to fly. Some of the Legaes wondered whether the woman’s family wasn’t holding out in order to retain exclusive benefit from the large payment anticipated from the Motor Vehicle Authority (MVA) – a government agency that paid out often significant claims to passengers injured or killed in car accidents. Others suggested that her kin had already stripped the woman’s house of furniture and money without a thought for her son’s inheritance. Witchcraft ran as a subtle subtext throughout – a likely explanation of how such tragedy should befall a young couple, especially given Kagiso’s growing profile in small business and the

church; but also a risk that hung over each family and between them, should their multiple negotiations go awry and produce intractable bad feeling. It was a tense and dangerous time, compounded by the deep shock and pain of the two deaths.

Finally, late on Thursday, an agreement was reached. Kagiso and his fiancée would be buried together in Dithaba. The funeral would be held on Saturday morning. The MVA had indeed been consulted, and was to provide a substantial sum towards the costs of the funeral. Those who had compromised by allowing the woman to be buried in Dithaba insisted that no expense should be spared. Joint teams, comprising members from each family, were sent to town to locate the best coffins. Modiri contributed no fewer than four cows from the family herd; vast quantities of food were procured by the women; the programmes were unusually large, at A4 size, and printed in full colour – making them exceptional enough to be fought over by those who attended the funeral. And hundreds attended. Most of both families were there, as were neighbours and friends from near and far. Staff, volunteers and clients from the local home-based care centre for people living with HIV – where Kagiso and his fiancée had met, and worked together – were in strong attendance, had contributed substantial financial support, and had even helped design and print the much-vaunted programme. Church members arrived from all over the district. Even the attendance of more ghostly figures – like the couple that had once run the local orphan care centre where Kagiso and I had met, who had long since left the country; and, of course, my own – was widely anticipated and rumoured, if ultimately disappointed. The funeral stretched much longer than usual to accommodate not only speakers from both families, but also the chief, and – in a spontaneous, moving gesture – a brief ceremony conducted by the elderly head of the couple's church, who bound them together in what he proclaimed a Christian marriage.

I do not propose to offer an analysis of Tswana funerary and burial practices in a time of AIDS here – and certainly not through the example of a car accident – especially given that they have been so ably described elsewhere (Durham 2002a; Durham and Klaitz 2002; Klaitz 2005, 2010: Chapter Six). But once the shock had

faded, I was struck by the extent to which the deaths of Kagiso and his wife mapped and condensed the range of *dikgang* – issues or conflicts, their negotiations and irresolutions – that emerged over the course of my fieldwork, and that have formed the backbone of the foregoing chapters. The preparations and funeral that followed also powerfully demonstrated the ways in which kinship is *constituted* in crisis and conflict, rather than being destroyed by it as is commonly assumed – thereby reiterating the central argument of this thesis. The sudden loss of Kagiso and his wife creates a darkly apt frame through which to draw together the stories of contemporary Tswana kinship I have tried to tell; and that framing is the task this conclusion undertakes.

The dangers of distance, movement, and moving together – which figure critically in the spatialities of Tswana kinship, discussed in Chapter One – are rendered especially blunt in the case of a car accident. The distance at which Kagiso’s wife was living away from her family, the apparent necessity of movement in the couple’s personal and working lives, and the ways in which kin immediately gravitated and were called to the *lelwapa* (courtyard) on news of the deaths, all echo the descriptions of kin space provided in that chapter. I described the *gae*, or home, as a multiple and scattered place – usually comprised of *masimo* (farm lands) and *moraka* (cattlepost), taking the *lelwapa* as a lodestone. I suggested the *gae* was integrated through gendered and generationally-differentiated practices of movement, staying, and care-work, which sought to strike a careful balance between closeness and distance – each of which produced *dikgang*. Whether in the disruptive intimacies and absences of Dipuo and his dalliances with the neighbour’s widow, or in the necessity and risk of sending children like Tefo “up and down” on errands, I argued that awkward balances must be struck between keeping family simultaneously together and apart. And it is in the continuous production and negotiation of *dikgang*, I suggested, that that balance is created.

This problem of getting and being away from family, while remaining connected to them, loosely characterises the problem of establishing personhood as well. As we saw in the construction of Lorato’s house (Chapter One), building is a critical and

continuous means of *go itirela*, or self-making. Building, too, invites a proliferation of problems: of mobilising resources and managing labour, as Lorato did among kin, neighbours, and NGO connections; of highlighting the failures of others – in this case, Lorato’s aunts and uncles – to build; of reworking one’s actual and potential relationships with relatives and partners, echoed in Lorato’s concerns about marriageability after she had built, and so on. Building, in other words, involves an accumulation of *dikgang* on the part of the builder, and an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to manage those issues – making *dikgang* central to personhood as well. Batswana do not build in a vacuum, of course: governmental control of plot allocation, combined with shortened timelines for plot development, and the advent of both governmental and non-governmental programmes to which builders have differential access (based on, for example, orphanhood) produce further problems to be negotiated. These *dikgang*, however, serve to knock builders out of sync, insisting upon a temporality that interferes with usual tactics of negotiation and frequently produces failure. It was noted with dismay that Kagiso had not even managed to build before his sudden death – a fact made the more bitter because he had helped improve and extend the house at home, and had saved an amount substantial enough to build for himself, but had been unable to secure a plot. Even Lorato expressed guilt around this circumstance, having chosen to build for herself rather than giving her plot to Kagiso when he had requested it years earlier.

Similarly intractable *dikgang* are produced in the spatial practices of social work offices and NGOs working with families in the village. Kagiso was a driver for both the home based care and orphan care centres at which he worked, and as we saw in Chapter One, the ability of NGOs and government to enable the movement of their clients was a key factor in their relevance to families. While they presented a surprising parallel to kinship spatiality – being equally scattered, requiring comparable movement, and emplacing the work of care in similar ways – I demonstrated that an inversion was at work, a centripetal tendency which moved clients away from the *lelwapa* and managed boundaries and access in such a way as to produce competing alternatives to kin space in which only clients were allowed. These similarities and divergences demonstrated clear links between kin practice and

intervention practice, but also dimensions of competition, displacement, and disruption that echo across the thesis.

Beyond these concerns, a preoccupation with who would contribute what, and how – in terms of things and work taken together – saturated negotiations around the funeral, reminiscent of the cases explored in Chapter Two. I argued there that for the Tswana, kin care is constituted in *contributions*: specific things (cattle, food, cash, cars or clothes, for example) understood in terms of the work of acquisition, production or looking-after they require, and made available to others. Reflecting on Modiri's responsibilities for the cattle, Kelebogile's for food, or Lesego's for cooking, I discussed the ways in which expected and actual contributions define (and are defined by) kin roles, by gender and age. As we saw in the *dikgang* that emerged in contributions around both cattle and food at home, they also enable a shifting generational framework whereby family members may inhabit multiple generational positions at once, creating alternately hierarchical and egalitarian relationships: Modiri was Kagiso's brother as well as his father; and Kelebogile was Oratile's sister, as well as her mother, and grandmother to Oratile's children, all of which relationships were indexed by responsibilities to contribute. Contributions foregone – as when Lesego stopped cooking – mark a profound threat to these relationships; and the question of who would contribute what at the funeral posed the particularly fraught problem not only of how surviving family members related to their dead, but how they related to one another, within and between the two families.

At the same time, contributions are subject to competing claims: the very things and work that a family expects of a given member are expected by potential partners as well, and figure critically in other processes of self-making besides. Chapter Two described the conundrums that Tuelo and Boikanyo respectively faced in trying to acquire things for themselves through others – Tuelo through theft and violence, Boikanyo through *motshelo* savings groups – and the claims to which these acquisitions are subjected. The uncertainty that emerges around what people can and should contribute, what they will contribute to whom and for how long, means that contributions are a fertile source of serious *dikgang*. Care, in other words, is

routinely subject to crisis. AIDS, of course, is frequently described as presenting a ‘crisis of care’ – a framing which, I argued, belies a fundamental misunderstanding of Tswana experiences of care. I suggested that the crisis AIDS presents may differ in degree, but not in kind, from the ordinary crisis of care. Interventions in response to AIDS, however – the bulk of which prioritise the provision of the very same goods listed above – *do* produce crises that differ in kind: by disentangling care-things from care-work, leaving both subject to competition within families over who might be seen to be ‘contributing’ it, and thereby profoundly disrupting the dynamic of contribution itself. Problematically, these *dikgang* – like others generated by government and NGOs – derive from sources outside the family, and thereby evade its capacity to negotiate them. The MVA payout described above posed precisely this threat; but the ultimate choice to contribute it entirely to the costs of the funeral defused its disruptive potential.

While the question of contributions cast a long shadow over the funeral, at the heart of the *dikgang* that emerged was the drawn-out, highly uncertain process of marriage – an issue examined in Chapter Three, alongside other questions about reproducing kinship in a time of AIDS. I suggested there that intimate relationships become kin relationships through a gradual and carefully managed process of *recognition*, whereby they become visible, speakable, and known among increasingly wide circles of family. I argued that recognition is drawn to women most meaningfully through pregnancy (which generally precedes marriage, as we saw with the parallel cases of Lorato and Boipelo); whereas with men, it is often first conferred through marriage. Every shift in recognisability is marked and achieved by *dikgang*, the negotiation of which progressively expands to include additional relations; and their engagement with these *dikgang* determines not simply how families might relate to one another, but the viability of the relationship their recognition shapes as well. As we saw, Kagiso’s first attempt to marry a previous partner was ultimately scuppered by her father’s unwillingness to engage in negotiation – which scuppered the relationship in turn. And the father’s unwillingness seemed to stem from unresolved *dikgang* between himself, the girl’s mother, and her family – demonstrating the intergenerational ripple effects that the characteristic *irresolution* of *dikgang* can

produce. Though Kagiso and his family had successfully negotiated his marriage on their second attempt, including the payment of *lobola* (brideprice), his wife's family's original refusal to bury her with him underlines the highly tenuous – even reversible – nature of recognition conferred by marriage, especially to the extent it relies on the indeterminate dimensions of *dikgang*. The couple's posthumous wedding was moving in part because it signified a final, irreversible recognition of the sort unavailable in life; marked the successful negotiation of *dikgang* between and within the two families; and because it settled any outstanding issues sufficiently that the child left behind would not inherit them when it came time for his own marriage.

Though the accumulation of *dikgang* promises a stable accumulation of personhood, then – pregnancy decisively reworks a woman's position and relationships in her natal family, as marriage reworks a man's position in the community, regardless of whether either the child or the marriage survives – building relationships through such *dikgang* is also risky and prone to failure. In this light, I suggested, the risk of contracting AIDS becomes one among many risks associated with intimate relationships; and if its stakes are higher, they are understood more in terms of potential effects on negotiating recognition than in terms of life and death. Indeed, I argued that protection against the indeterminacies generated by recognition and the *dikgang* it generates may be more crucial to Botswana than protection against contraction of the disease itself – a possibility that goes some distance in explaining stubbornly high rates of HIV infection in Botswana.

The child left behind by the deaths of Kagiso and his wife brings us to the questions of children's mobility, the claims of responsibility for their care that are made or rejected, and their potency in asserting the limits of kinship – with which Chapter Four was concerned. The boy concerned had been moving between his mother's house in Dithaba, and her family's house across the country; and while he'd become used to Kagiso, and we'd seen him frequently at home, the decision was taken to return him to his mother's natal village. Given that he had already been in frequent movement, continued shuttling among kin of the sort we saw with Lesedi's family in

Chapter Four was highly likely. I described this kind of child circulation as an experimental extension of the circulations of kin described in Chapter One, the economies of contribution in Chapter Two, and the recognisability of relationships in Chapter Three. It attracts potential *dikgang* connected to all three, the management of which serves to articulate which kin might be considered ‘close’, and which ‘distant’. Drawing on Lesedi’s disillusionment with the ‘far kin’ who offered to send her to school but instead treated her as a maid, I argued that child circulation tends to reproduce appropriate distances of relatedness rather than producing new bonds of closeness; it asserts limits, differentiates and distances kin. Lesedi’s case, and that of her cousin Tumi – taken in by a ‘close’ aunt – demonstrated that circulating children among kin already bound by economies of contribution tends to produce irresolvable *dikgang* managed much as those around contribution would be, leaving relationships unchanged. By comparison, circulating children to non-kin – as Bonolo did when he decided to foster himself to the Legae family in response to ill-treatment and a fear of witchcraft at home – fails to establish kin-like relationships, partly in that *dikgang* are suspended and ignored, neither worsened nor addressed. Formal, government-sponsored fostering, in contrast, seeks to form relations of mutual care, responsibility, and love between non-kin, and attempts to provide a permanent fix to *dikgang*. In this sense, I argued, formal fostering seems to collapse appropriate distances among and between families that child circulation would ordinarily reassert, while offering not only an alternative family but an alternative ideal of kinship in its place – creating a disruption of and direct competition with usual kin practice, reminiscent of that seen in preceding chapters.

Of course, the funeral itself was a major event, and in this sense echoed the family party and initiation homecoming described in Chapter Five. There, I suggested that such events serve to articulate the boundaries of family and its proper relationships to community, while offering opportunities to redefine personhood. The presence of everyone at the funeral, from neighbours to chiefs and churchmates to friends, the provision of food, the programme, the management of work and space, all echo the dynamics of the family party in Chapter Five – if with distinct, dark differences. And

both death itself, and the couple's posthumous marriage, marked a new configuration of personhood for them both.

In Chapter Five, I suggested that the distinctions between family and village relied primarily on the careful management of hiding and sharing – an echo of the recognition dynamic described in Chapter Three above – by which non-kin are drawn into the family's performance of success, but carefully excluded from the messier realities of *dikgang*. The initiation homecoming provided a comparable opportunity to draw the family into the *morafe's* (tribe's) performance of success, while containing *dikgang* in the family sphere. I suggested that attention to *dikgang* demonstrates ways in which the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, is rendered encompassing of both the *motse* (village) and *morafe* (tribe) – articulating a relationship in which the latter are understood to begin in and to be sustained by the home. The deaths of Kagiso and his wife – especially given the hopes people had for their growing prosperity – marked a disastrous sort of inter-familial *kgang*, making the performance of a successful response all the more critical and complex to manage. This imperative weighed upon the negotiations leading up to the funeral, and upon the question of how best each family could demonstrate its own ability to respond – forcing the question of which *dikgang* needed most to be hidden from the other family, which shared, and how. It was partly this consideration, I suggest, that motivated the debate over where Kagiso's wife should properly be buried. In the end, the two families seem to have concluded that they were in a much better position to preserve the priority of relationship between family and community by working together. Jointly, they could draw in the maximum number of people, to whom they could demonstrate their encompassing reach (through costly coffins, fancy programmes, and ample food); and having successfully negotiated the question of the burial between them, they could do so with relative confidence in being able to contain further *dikgang* that might arise. Together, they succeeded in drawing the village – or the better part of two villages – into the home, containing the risks that posed, and securing the transformation of the couple's status by so doing.

Finally, the ambivalent influences of government and NGOs around the funeral – at which they are simultaneously absent and present, marginal and critical – echoes both the ambivalence of their influences in the home, and of the home’s influence on them, with which Chapter Six was especially concerned. As we saw above, a major financial contribution from a government agency – the MVA – was both a source of suspicious speculation, and a means of achieving compromise within and between the two families, in part by alleviating the burden of contributions they faced. Kagiso and his wife were also linked with a variety of AIDS-oriented NGOs in the village, through their work and even in their relationship: members of the home-based care project figured strongly among the attendees at the funeral, carried out significant work, and made significant contributions, honouring relations mediated by and through the project on which they had worked together. And of course, my own connections to Kagiso and the rest of the family had been forged through our mutual involvements in the orphan care NGO. At the same time, that NGO had long since closed; and for all my connection with the family, I was notably absent at the funeral.

Chapter Six framed these tensions in terms of the parallel projects evident in the internal dynamics of government and NGO offices: one of domesticating the workplace, and another of bureaucratising or professionalising the household. I argued that both of these projects falter, in part because as much as these agencies may succeed in mediating kin relations, ultimately they can neither enter into nor incorporate the family – a limit highlighted by the ways in which *dikgang* feature in their internal dynamics. While the home-based care staff mediated Kagiso’s relationship to his wife, and participated meaningfully in the funeral, they were not themselves family, and could not have participated in resolving the issue of the wife’s burial. The effects of NGOs and government agencies on kinship practice described across the thesis are achieved, as it were, by ripple effect at one step’s remove, rather than through direct involvement in kin relations as such. Families, for their part, efficiently draw such agencies into the realm of kin practice while carefully excluding them as kin actors.

What these projects do evince, however, is an apparent tendency for kin-like structures and practices – including familiar dynamics of *dikgang* – to be naturalised in the internal dynamics of, and relationships between, both state and non-governmental agencies in local, national, and transnational spheres. Kagiso's marriage to his co-worker, the fact that his sister worked in the same NGO, and the fact that its founder was a close friend of their mother and took a parental concern in them all indicate ways in which the home-based care project relied upon, mediated, and reproduced kin relations. But this naturalisation presents a conundrum, in that each of these spheres bring together multiple, mutually familiar and yet divergent notions of kinship, within a discourse and practice that explicitly differentiates itself from kinship. As we saw in both the social work office and NGO in Chapter Six, and perhaps most powerfully at the opening ceremony of the campsite, an array of Euro-American notions of what kinship should be, and of how it should relate to politics in particular, were brought into jarring juxtaposition with their Tswana counterparts. These contrary notions mirror but also disrupt one another, especially because they are effaced and implicit. This same mirroring and disruption, of course, is evident in intervention programmes' influence on households. I suggested that the failure that plagues governmental and non-governmental intervention in families alike – or at least, the sharp divergences between their intended aims and actual outcomes – may be traced back to this confusion of kinships, and their tendency to saturate and overwhelm the bureaucratic practice that seeks to contain them. At the same time, this confusion of kinships produces an encompassment reminiscent of that described in Chapter Five, whereby kin logic and practice does not simply escape political projects of containment, but defines, motivates, and disrupts them from within.

Throughout these chapters, everything that we might understand as constitutive of Tswana kinship created *dikgang*, the negotiation of which produced additional *dikgang* in turn, in a continuous, fraught, and yet surprisingly adaptive cycle. *Dikgang*, in this sense, form a critical structural dimension of Tswana kinship. This understanding of *dikgang* suggests a novel role for crisis and conflict as something more than simply external, contextual influences on kinship practice, or unfortunate but anomalous and fundamentally inconsequential corollaries of being family. I have

attempted to make the case that crisis and conflict are, instead, distinctly *constitutive* of kinship. I suggest that crisis is inevitably produced by deep tensions and contradictions in the work to which kinship is put – between, for example, enabling the development of a distinctly individualist personhood, while retaining the togetherness and mutual support of family; or between creating closeness and maintaining distance (Chapter One), accumulating and sharing (or sharing and separating – Chapter Two), recognising and concealing (Chapter Three), connecting and dividing (Chapter Four), creating ‘publics’ and preserving ‘privacy’ (Chapter Five), as well as between multiple ideals of kinship (Chapter Six) and between its ideals and reality, among other contradictions we have seen. And I suggest further that it is the ongoing negotiation of crisis that enables kin to strike unlikely balances among these contrary imperatives, continuously and adaptively. I have shown that for the Tswana, the ongoing negotiation of *dikgang* both defines and differentiates relationships among kin – by generation and gender (Chapters One, Two) – and between kin and non-kin (Chapters Four, Five); and that, at the same time, it is fundamental to the reproduction of kinship (Chapter Three). Personhood, too, emerges as a process of accumulating and managing *dikgang*, and waxes and wanes depending on the sort that have been undertaken and one’s success in facing and carrying them (since their resolution is often suspended indefinitely). The notion that crisis and conflict might reflect not only common experiences but critical structural dimensions of kinship goes some distance in explaining the surprising resilience of kinship in times of more general crisis like Botswana’s time of AIDS; and provides, I suggest, ample opportunity for cross-cultural application and comparison as well.

The question remains as to how far we can push the idea that crisis or conflict constitutes kinship. Throughout my time in Botswana, so-called ‘passion killings’ – murder-suicides, usually committed by young men upon their girlfriends (and then themselves) – were rife, and subject to extensive public commentary and concern. Passion killings were often the result of *dikgang* between partners (and occasionally their families) of the sorts I have described, as well as being a source of serious public *dikgang*; and they suggest one violent limit on the generative potential of conflict. There is also some question as to whether different external contexts of

crisis and conflict work upon the internal crisis-dynamics of kinship differently. While I suspect that some of the conclusions drawn here about the AIDS crisis might apply in other public health crisis situations, comparison to different sorts of large-scale crisis or conflict – whether natural disasters, overt political violence, or economic collapse, for example – in different socio-political and cultural contexts might describe other critical limits to the argument I have presented. I hope, in the example of Botswana's experiences of and responses to AIDS, at least to have challenged the prevalent assumption that crisis and conflict simply destroy families, and that the only way of understanding kinship in such circumstances is in terms of breakdown or collapse.

In virtually all of the cases suggested above, of course, there is not a singular cultural framing of crisis or conflict at work, but multiple framings. To the extent that each sort of crisis or conflict invites intervention, and to the extent that those interventions originate in vast range of different institutional and socio-cultural contexts around the world, to talk about crisis is automatically to make connections and comparisons. Crisis is, in other words, exceptionally well-suited to anthropological study. The perspectives I have provided here would undoubtedly benefit from further investigation into the ways that socio-cultural attitudes towards conflict or crisis, and its implications for families, inform humanitarian intervention ideology and programming originating outside Botswana.

In challenging the assumption that crisis is simply destructive, I have also sought to provide a fresh perspective on the wide array of governmental and non-governmental programmes that take it as their starting point. Part of the motivating concern of my research was to shed light on those factors that consistently frustrate family welfare programming in Botswana, and frequently produce unintended and highly problematic knock-on effects for the families they seek to assist. As we have seen, most of these factors can be traced back to a fundamental misunderstanding of the adaptability of the Tswana family and the importance of *dikgang* in that elasticity. This misunderstanding underpins other problematic assumptions in turn, about everything from the spatial and temporal norms of the Tswana home (Chapter One)

to the management of resources among kin (Chapter Two), from the long-fraught unfolding of kinship reproduction and the life-course to relative assessments of risk (Chapter Three), from the role and power of children (Chapter Four) to the relative priority and power of family (Chapter Five), as well as – perhaps most crucially – a misapprehension of the ways in which kinship and government or organisational practice ought properly to relate (Chapter Six). While many of these programmes have adopted practices that are reminiscent of Tswana kinship practice, and thereby create an influential resonance or link, I have argued that their effects have been to disrupt, invert, muddle, over-extend, and competitively replace existing kinship practice. Combined with an explicit mandate of alleviating crisis, resolving conflict and re-creating the broken family in an appropriately ‘modern’ shape, these misframings create a legacy of disruption that has affected the Tswana family much more deeply than AIDS itself. While the conclusions drawn above suggest a certain inescapability in the dynamics they describe, they also provide a fundamental reframing of the problems facing Tswana families that holds potential, I hope, for experimentally rethinking social work and NGO practice alike.

Finally, I hope to have provided a case for rethinking the conceptual and experiential relationships between kinship and politics, as we understand them in social sciences research. Michael Lambek (2013) argues that kinship is characterised by a “surfeit of meaning, relations, and sentiment” (2013: 242); and I have argued that much of the work of kinship for the Tswana is to contain, shape, and direct that surfeit, and the dangers it presents. The goals of states and transnational organisations working with families might be understood in much the same terms of containment and control (2013: 251-55), and of redirecting that surfeit to naturalise and justify institutional exercises of power. Paradoxically, however, as we have seen, agency interventions in family strategies of containment *disrupt* that work of containment, producing a confused, undifferentiated and unbounded profusion of meaning and relations in turn. To use Lambek’s terms, state and organisational intervention in kinship exacerbates its “immodern” excesses precisely in the ways it seeks to eliminate or ‘modernise’ them. This disruption and exacerbation is not simply a matter of problematic systems that need to be fixed, however; nor is it simply about the

depersonalised and dehumanising effects of bureaucratic systems. It is, I have tried to show, a direct product of the surfeit it seeks to contain: states and transnational organisations fail with families because their work is understood, experienced, and enacted in kinship terms and kin-like practice, and because these terms and practices tap into a multiplicitous confusion of kinship models. Such analytical possibilities only emerge when we read kinship and politics together, rather than assuming that they are separate and exist in fixed relationships with one another (McKinnon and Cannell 2013).

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A few months after the funeral, I called the Legaes to see how things were going. It had been a difficult time on all of them. Mmapula had not ploughed – the funeral had been held at the beginning of the ploughing season, and she had not been out to the lands since – and so food was in shorter supply than usual. Winter was coming and warm clothes were scarce. The combi van that Kagiso had run as a school bus to the nearby town had broken down; two of the children who had enrolled in school there were struggling to get back and forth. The younger children had been deeply upset by Kagiso's death, and were inclined to reminisce about their uncle, going so far as to post photos of his *lobola* negotiations on Facebook. Mmapula had reprimanded them harshly for vocalising their memories more than once, and had taken to making wry comments about how much they ate, as if they hadn't noticed their uncle was no longer there to feed them. Meanwhile, she and Dipuo had paid to have the wrecked car towed home, and it remained in the yard behind the house – a fact many friends and neighbours had expressed concern about, partly because of its symbolic concentration of grief, and partly because of implicit concerns that it may have been bewitched.

But perhaps most worryingly of all, Dipuo had been making more strange and unsettling pronouncements – and they had been taking on increasingly dark overtones. “He said something to Boikanyo about the next one who's going to go under the ground,” Lorato divulged. She wasn't sure of the context or complaint, but

the statement itself was so threatening that it left no room for extenuating circumstance. “The old man likes to blame Kagiso’s death on the Bangwato,” – another Tswana tribe – “but these days Modiri is wondering whether it wasn’t him. It’s like that’s what he’s trying to say. Modiri and the others are planning to call him and tell him that if he doesn’t promise to come back from the lands to stay in the village, they’re out [of his life].”

The call weighed heavily on me long after I’d hung up. We’d discussed various tacks to be taken on each of the issues in turn. Modiri was already fixing the combi. Boikanyo was looking into boarding school options. I offered to look into finding good winter clothes, coming on sale in the northern hemisphere, to send. Lorato had agreed to talk to her grandmother about our collective concern over the car, and see if she would be willing for us to pay to have it removed. I talked to the children about being considerate towards their elders’ discomfort with speaking about the dead. Oratile agreed to talk to her mother about the way she was speaking to the children. Modiri and Boikanyo would call their father. It would all take time. None of it suggested decisive solutions – indeed, most of it suggested more problems to come. Being so far away, it felt overwhelming, and I felt impotent.

Over the next weeks, there was a spate of Facebook activity among the family who used the site. Boipelo created a family Facebook group and posted photos from the last Christmas I had been in Botswana. Tsepho posted lovelorn status updates; Lesego deftly deflected suitors on her wall; Lorato ‘officially’ announced a relationship, and then posted a note to the family group to say she was moving to the next town for a new job. Moagi wrote to say hello while on a work trip up north to Kasane; Oratile, who had also moved for work, wrote to tell me she was taking some of children from home to stay with her for a while. The contrast with the weighty phone conversation was striking: here there was a sense of growth, movement, and possibility.

On reflection, I realised that even the density of *dikgang* I had heard about over the phone presented possibility, in its own way. Modiri’s insistence on calling his father

home opened up the possibility that he and his siblings might successfully assert a new authority (which escaped them in Chapter Five); just as the children's insistence on vocally reminiscing about their uncle opened up the possibility of reworking their relationships not only with his memory but with their grandmother. Tsepho, who had been commuting to school, began boarding, which afforded her considerable comparative autonomy for the first time. Boikanyo, who had been working doubly hard at the lands, was gradually solidifying a claim to continue working them as her own. Each of these possibilities, of course, presented new *dikgang* in turn; but taken together, they reminded me that among family, *dikgang* are never intractable. They are always already in the process of being dispersed, suspended, or transformed into other *dikgang*, which are also negotiated into new manageability, in a continuous, adaptive cycle.

I realised that the apparently intractable knot of problems with which I had been presented over the phone had not been given to me for untangling, nor simply to re-entangle me; it was meant to draw me back into the continuous processes of disentangling in which I had a part to play, but which reached well beyond me and involved us all. For all that I had come to understand the dynamics of crisis in the Lega household, my default position was still to frame problems as things that needed *solving*, possibly by me – an artefact of my time working in both NGOs and Social Services, and of my own upbringing, without doubt. But for the Legaes, including me in *dikgang* had always been, first and foremost, a way of including me in family. *Dikgang* were what we shared when we spoke together; they were what *brought* us together, and what kept us together. Moagi would often say, by way of concluding his brief updates on the unfolding *dikgang* of the funeral, “*Re mmogo*” – we are together. And in that simple statement, he reminded me that for all the *dikgang* we had faced, and for all the directions our lives had taken, we were indeed still together; and that in the face of these new challenges – indeed, *because* of them – we would remain so.

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